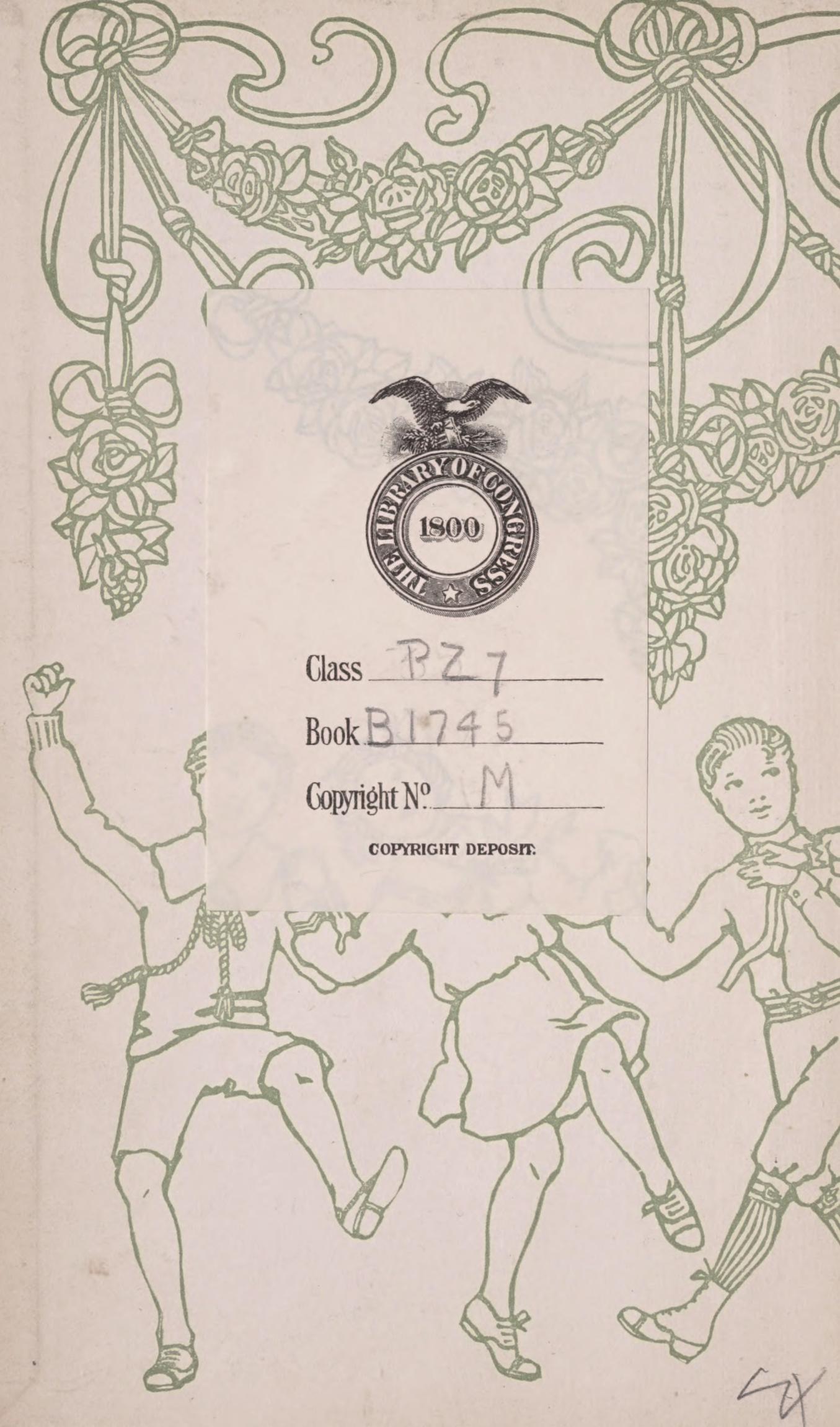
Mrs. Pinners Little Girl

Louise R. Baker



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MRS. PINNER'S LITTLE GIRL

"To-day is my tenth birthday"
H.L.K.
"I promised Mamma that I would take care of Kit and Buz and the baby"

MRS. PINNER'S LITTLE GIRL

by

LOUISE R. BAKER

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To
My Little Cousin
Dorothy

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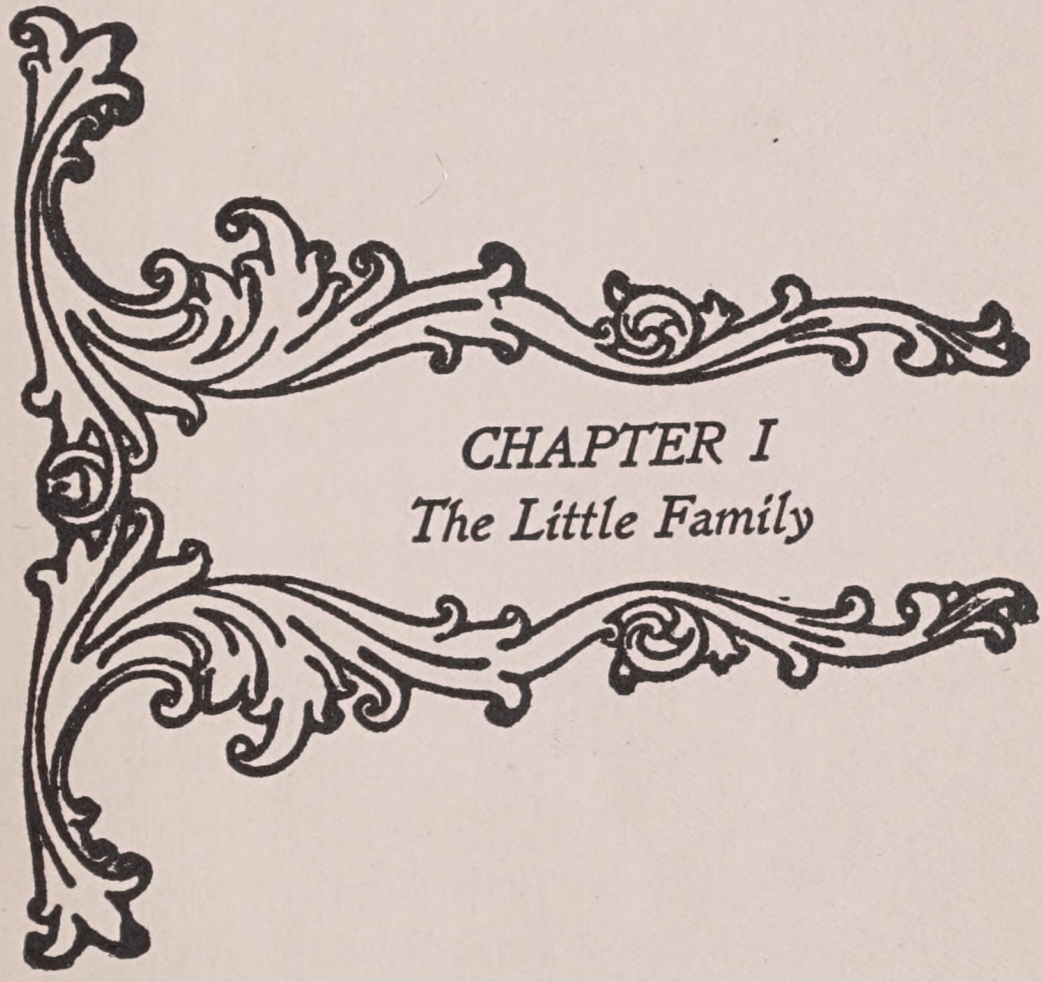


CHAPTER I

The Little Family

CHAPTER I

The Little Family

THERE is no better way of beginning the story of "Mrs. Pinner's Little Girl" than by giving *verbatim* the initial pages of Mary Dainger-field's diary; so here they are:

"July 15.—I told mamma that I would write in my diary as soon as I was ten years old. To-day is my tenth birthday. I did not know how bad I would feel when I opened the book and took up the pen, for mamma gave me the book and papa gave me the pen, and both mamma and papa are dead.

"It was hard for my mother to have papa go off to the hospital while she was sick in bed her-self, but she thought, and so did I, that he was going off to the hospital to be cured and would come back well and strong. The news of papa's death just killed mamma, that is what the doctor and everybody says.

"The book in which I am writing is very thick

and the pages are very long. My pen has a gold point and an ebony handle. I always remember that my mother gave me the book and my father gave me the pen, and I will keep my diary conscientiously and never forget to begin my sentences with a capital letter. My mother said: 'There is no use for you to begin a diary, little daughter, if you do not intend to keep it conscientiously.'

"Kit is sliding down the banisters. She is making a terrible rumpus. I wonder that Cousin Cynthia does not make her stop. Cousin Cynthia says that Kit is very young for seven years old. She says her full name, Katharine, is prettier than Kit. She calls Kit Katharine, and is trying to teach her to be quiet and ladylike. I think it will take a very long time.

"That is Buz laughing. Buz has a strong laugh for such a little boy; but he is round and fat if he is not tall. Buz believes he is tall and sometimes he says he is a man. Kit tells him that men talk plainly but Buz says he does not care if they do, he is a man anyway. Buz says, 'I wear pants like my papa, and I wear a coat like my papa, and I wear a shirt like my papa, so I am a man, Miss

Kit.' Only Buz says, 'So zam man, Miss Tit.' His real name is not Buz; it is John Edward Daingerfield, the same as papa's. Buz is just a funny little nickname, but even Cousin Cynthia does not think of calling him anything else.

"That is the baby crying. I am going to get a picture of the baby and paste it here on the leaf of my diary. It will look so cute. Mamma would like me to do it, I know. I doubt if there is a prettier baby in the world than ours, yet he has only four teeth and hardly any hair and he slobbers all over you. The baby is named after one of our great-grandfathers, the one who was an officer in the Revolutionary War. I am glad of that. I think it must have been a fine thing for a man to have been an officer in the Revolutionary War. It is a good thing that Buz is named after papa or he would be jealous of the baby, for Buz says he is a 'zoldier' already. But I will be surprised if ever anybody calls the baby Sterling Frederick Mortimer. Now we call him baby, Cousin Cynthia and all of us. One day he slobbered over Cousin Cynthia's sleeve.

"Cousin Cynthia came here as soon as mamma died. She thinks that Willowbrook is a queer

little place for people to live. She thought we lived in a town. She has been with us three weeks and I am wondering and wondering and wondering about something: Is Cousin Cynthia an old maid?

"July 16.—I always thought we were rich. I don't know why for we live in a little house. Almost all the houses in Willowbrook are little. There are only ten. Ours has a large side yard and a lot. Mamma said that was why papa rented it and because it is only five minutes' walk from the station. Cousin Cynthia told me last night that we are very poor, that we have nothing to live on. It is very sad. She says that papa received a good salary from the government but that he and mamma never could manage to save any money. She says that she has been worrying a great deal about what is to become of us, for she is poor too, and has to support her uncle who lives in a hospital. If I were Cousin Cynthia's uncle I would not live in a hospital. I felt strange when Cousin Cynthia was talking and my eyes seemed to grow big and hot. I did not cry but I had what papa said was a frog in your throat. People say that I am very sensible for

my age, and I suppose that is the reason Cousin Cynthia told me all those things last night. She said that poor people ought not to marry, and when she said it she put me in mind of Kit, for she wrung her hands like Kit does when she says things that she ought not to say. Papa always said: 'Look out for what's coming when Miss Kit wrings her hands.' I went to bed and could not go to sleep for a long time. It is so sad to think that Kit and Buz and the baby haven't any father and mother, and oh, I want them so much myself!

"I must always remember one thing: I promised mamma that I would take care of Kit and Buz and the baby.

"I really believe that Cousin Cynthia is an old maid.

"July 17.—Cousin Cynthia received a letter in the morning mail. She looked red in the face after she had gone over the letter several times, and after breakfast she told aunty that she wanted her to clean the parlor and the hall, and to wash off the porch. She did not tell us who had written the letter though Kit asked her six times. She is in her room now answering the letter, for

Buz peeped through the keyhole and saw her. Buz never used to look through the keyhole, neither did aunty. When I tell Buz it is not honorable, he says he will not do it any more, but he is so little that he forgets.

"Aunty is cleaning the parlor and I know she is grumbling. I will go down and help her if she will let me."

The little girl who closed the pages of her diary on that seventeenth day of July and carefully put the book away out of reach of Buz and out of sight of Kit, was something that was very sweet to look at. She was tall for her ten years of age, though extremely slight; her brown hair, parted in the middle, waved from the part and curled on the shoulders, not riotously, like Kit's; everything about little Mary Daingerfield was demure. The expression of the brown eyes was demure and so also was that of the pretty little mouth. People credited the child with a great amount of sense, and her mother had made a companion of her.

Aunty was grumbling viciously when Mary appeared in the parlor.

"House-cleanin's wuck for de spring," she said,

"an' not for de broilin' summah-time. I nevah heard o' washin' paints in de summah-time when dey done ben gone ovah in de spring. Yas, I's got to wash de paints in dis room an' de hall, dem's de ordahs. I's ole an' rheumatic an' house-cleanin' nigh brecks my back, but dat don't meck no diff'ence."

"Can I help you wash the paints, aunty," asked the little girl.

"No," said the old woman, a smile lighting up her face for an instant, "I ain't gunno hab you drabblin' roun' in no ole scrub watah; you's a heap betta off wid yo' books, little Miss Mary. I ain't gunno forgit in no hurry dat yo' learned me an' Kit to write las' wintah."

"You learned quicker than Kit," said Mary, "and you make nicer capital letters than Kit. Papa said Kit's capital letters looked like Greek."

"He say mine was fust-rate," said aunty, solemnly, "an' he wan't no brag an' bluster neida."

Then aunty gave her attention to the scrubbing again and worked herself more and more wrothy. When she was really through with the

house-cleaning, she sought her kitchen in an unhappy frame of mind, her last winter's teacher following at her heels. Safe in her own domain the old woman said some disrespectful things of Miss Cynthia Daingerfield.

"Reckon," she said, "mebbe Miss Cynthy done took it into her haid to git married while she down here at Willowbrook an' has had de house cleaned up for de weddin'. Reckon she think she got de chillen she best get de man. Wal, I hope de house is spick an' span enough to suit her hifolutin taste, I know my back's mos' broke crawlin' roun' lak a dog. Nex' lettah she write to de man she do well to ordah him fotch a cook 'long to de weddin' feast, for I give warnin' right here dat I's ready to clare off de premises."

"That would be mean of you, aunty," said the little girl.

"What'll be mean of me, Mary Daingerfield?" demanded the old woman, for when she was angry she always called her little Miss Mary "Mary Daingerfield," and she talked very fast. "What'll be mean of me, Mary Daingerfield?"

"To go away and leave us," answered Mary, "and after I taught you to write, too."

Thinking of last winter and the writing lessons, the troublesome frog had jumped into Mary's throat.

Aunty had seated herself in her favorite chair. It was a queer-looking chair, painted green, and was not a bit comfortable. The old woman's sleeves were rolled up to her shoulders, and her hands were whitish from the scrubbing.

"Little Miss Mary, come here," she said, and held out her bare arms.

The little girl went right into them.

"I'd nevah leave you alls, honey, if I had my say," said aunty. Her arms were fast around Mary and her voice sounded as if she, too, had a frog in her throat. "Ain't I lived wid you sence you was born an' yo' mamma befo' you? Ain't de changes what's come jest brecking my ole black hawt?"

"I don't believe that Cousin Cynthia is going to be married," said Mary.

Aunty gave a derisive laugh.

"No man in dese pawts would hab her," she declared. "Miss Cynthy's too clean for de Maryland folks."

It seemed to little Miss Mary that aunty was

not fair either to her cousin Cynthia or to Maryland, for certainly the house looked very nice when it was clean.

"Cousin Cynthia is real pretty," she said.

"Den why'n she git married?" asked aunty.

Mary was glad that she had an explanation to give.

"Cousin Cynthia thinks that poor people oughtn't to marry," she said, gravely.

"De ole Yankee!" sneered aunty, adding in the same breath, "Den what she git dat letta for? Dat letta hed a one-cent stamp on it, dat letta come from round here somewhar."

"I am sure that Cousin Cynthia is not going to be married," said little Miss Mary, with conviction, "but after awhile she will have to go back to Boston to teach her school and to take care of her uncle who lives in a hospital. If you go and get mad, aunty, and find yourself another service place, there'll be nobody left but us children. I promised mamma that I would take care of Kit and Buz and the baby, but I don't see how I can manage."

"You promised your mamma dat?" cried aunty. "You pore little soul!"

"If you leave us I don't see how I will do it," said Mary, forlornly.

"How you gunno do it if I stay wid you, little Miss Mary?" inquired the old woman, hoarsely.

"Oh, I have thought of a way," returned the little girl. "I will tell you all about it after Cousin Cynthia goes back to Boston if you don't go and find yourself another service place."

The next day the occupants of the little house, at least those who had arrived at the age of reason, understood why it was that Miss Cynthia Daingerfield had ordered the house-cleaning.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon a carriage drove up to the gate and an old lady and a gentleman stepped out. The doors and windows were all open and everybody saw them. Cousin Cynthia met them at the door. The front yard and the steps belonging to the little house were both steep and the old lady was very fat. She was panting hard as she stepped into the hall, but she was in a good humor. The old gentleman was in a good humor, too.

"Mr. and Mrs. Pinner, I presume," said Cousin Cynthia with a graceful and friendly bow.

"Yes, here we are," said the old gentleman, holding out his hand. "We received your note this morning, and we thank you for it, Miss Daingerfield, both Mrs. Pinner and myself thank you for it."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Daingerfield, we certainly do thank you for that letter," said the old lady.

By this time Mr. and Mrs. Pinner were in the parlor; they had taken seats and Cousin Cynthia had handed Mrs. Pinner a fan, for the day was very warm. Mary and Kit and Buz, who had escaped from the hall into the parlor, had quickly run back again into the hall, for none of them had ever seen the visitors and they felt that their coming was an important event.

"May we see *all* the children?" asked the old lady.

"Remember, wife, that we're after a little girl," said the old gentleman.

These words were sufficient invitation for Kit, who ran into the parlor. Buz backed against the hall wall and put both of his hands over his mouth. He wished to be polite and not laugh, but the old lady was so very fat.

The demure little brown-eyed maid was filled

with curiosity. She gave a step forward and her Cousin Cynthia nodded for her to come in.

Buz stifled his laugh and followed Mary on tiptoe.

"Now, you want to see the baby," said Kit, addressing the old lady, and before any one could prevent her she was running up the stairs.

Aunty said afterward:

"I was 'shamed o' myself for not dressin' dat chile in his Sunday bes' 'fore I left him go to de pawla but dat Kit she's quicker'n a fly."

Kit found the baby sitting on the floor near the door and, without asking leave, she grabbed him and ran.

"Here we all are," she said, putting the baby down in front of Mrs. Pinner.

Buz had seated himself on the sofa beside Mary. He was staring at Mrs. Pinner and trying his best to be a polite boy, but every now and then he gave a little giggle.

"This is a mighty lively little girl," said the old gentleman, looking at Kit.

"Yes," said the old lady, "but she isn't as pretty as the other one with the brown hair."

"My hair is light brown," said Kit; "it used to be yellow."

"I think I heard the little boy call her name awhile ago," said Mrs. Pinner, regarding Mary with interest. "Father, you ask her her name."

"What is your name, little girl?" inquired Mr. Pinner.

"Mary," answered the little girl, and both Mr. and Mrs. Pinner smiled appreciatively.

"I'm Buz," said Buz.

"My name is Katharine Daingerfield," said Kit, giving a toss to her light-brown or yellow hair, "and I'm seven years old."

Cousin Cynthia was not her usual self or she would have made Kit sit down and behave.

"Mary is a very sensible child," she said.

"I'm sure of it," cried the old gentleman, "and she certainly is pretty."

Mary's mamma and papa had never called her pretty in her hearing, aunty was the only person in the house who did it. She looked down at her feet and then at Buz's which were swinging vigorously.

"See the lovely color in her cheeks, father,"

said the old lady. "Little girl, look right here, please, I want to see your eyes."

"Mary!" called Cousin Cynthia; and Mary looked.

"Brown," said the old gentleman.

"I knew it," said the old lady, tenderly.

"The baby's are brown, too," said Kit. "Look!"

Then Cousin Cynthia noticed Kit and bade all the children run away and play.

As Mary was picking up the baby, for Kit never took things back, Mrs. Pinner patted her on the cheek and said to the old gentleman:

"Just see, father, how nicely she takes hold of the baby. I know all these children are just wrapped up in her. Aren't they now, Miss Daingerfield?"

"She is a very sensible child," repeated Cousin Cynthia, "and the children are very fond of her."

Katharine Daingerfield, aged seven years, was a great person for trying to please people. Once upon a time her father had been afraid that Kit was going to stand on her head for the bishop. She understood that Mary was in favor and she turned at the door and called back:

"That girl keeps a diary. Mamma gave her the book and papa gave her the pen and she's written lots of pages and she hasn't a blot on any of them!"

The children went up-stairs directly, hoping to find aunty, but she was not there; so they stood at a front window and watched for Mr. and Mrs. Pinner to leave the house. It seemed a long time before the carriage started on its way home. Scarcely was the carriage out of sight before Cousin Cynthia appeared wearing her hat.

"Cousin Cynthia is going for a walk. What's that for?" demanded Kit.

"Doin' to det tandy," said Buz.

Whatever was Cousin Cynthia's quest, hardly had she reached the sidewalk when the attention of the three watchers was diverted. Aunty came bounding up the steps and into the room.

Instinctively the children knew that the old woman had been listening at the back parlor door.

"Wal, I cla' to goodness!" she cried.

"What did they want, aunty?" asked Kit.

Aunty seated herself on the floor. The baby was making for her when she opened her arms

and said, "Little Miss Mary, come here," and Mary reached her before the baby.

"Dat lady come huntin' a chile," said aunty. "She live five mile off, past de crossroads, an' she come here huntin' a chile."

"To take home?" demanded Kit.

Aunty nodded, and little Miss Mary's head fell down upon her shoulder.

"To keep?" said Kit, and again aunty nodded.

They were all on top of the old woman by this time, the baby whimpering because he did not have the best place.

"What zhe want shile for?" inquired Buz.

"Why don't she get an orphan?" said Kit.

"Yes," said Mary, with a sob, "why doesn't she get an orphan?"

"Wal, ef you alls ain't de funniest chillen!" cried aunty, and her words caused Mary to remember that she and Kit and Buz and the baby were orphans sure enough. Mrs. Pinner was after an orphan, a little orphan girl, to take home and to keep.

"Zhe big fat old lady," declared Buz.

"You're little an' fat yo'self, Buz," said aunty,

"an' some day I reckon you'll be mighty big and fat. Dar ain't no call for you to meck fun o' fat folks."

"I will!" cried Buz.

"You'll laugh out loud at her, won't you, Buz?" asked Kit.

"Yes, will," said Buz.

"Aunty," said Mary, appealingly, "why don't you say that Mrs. Pinner shan't have any of your children?"

"Zhan't have me!" cried Buz, furiously.

"She shan't have me, that's certain," said Kit. "Buz, you speak for the baby."

"Zhan't dit me," said Buz, speaking for the baby.

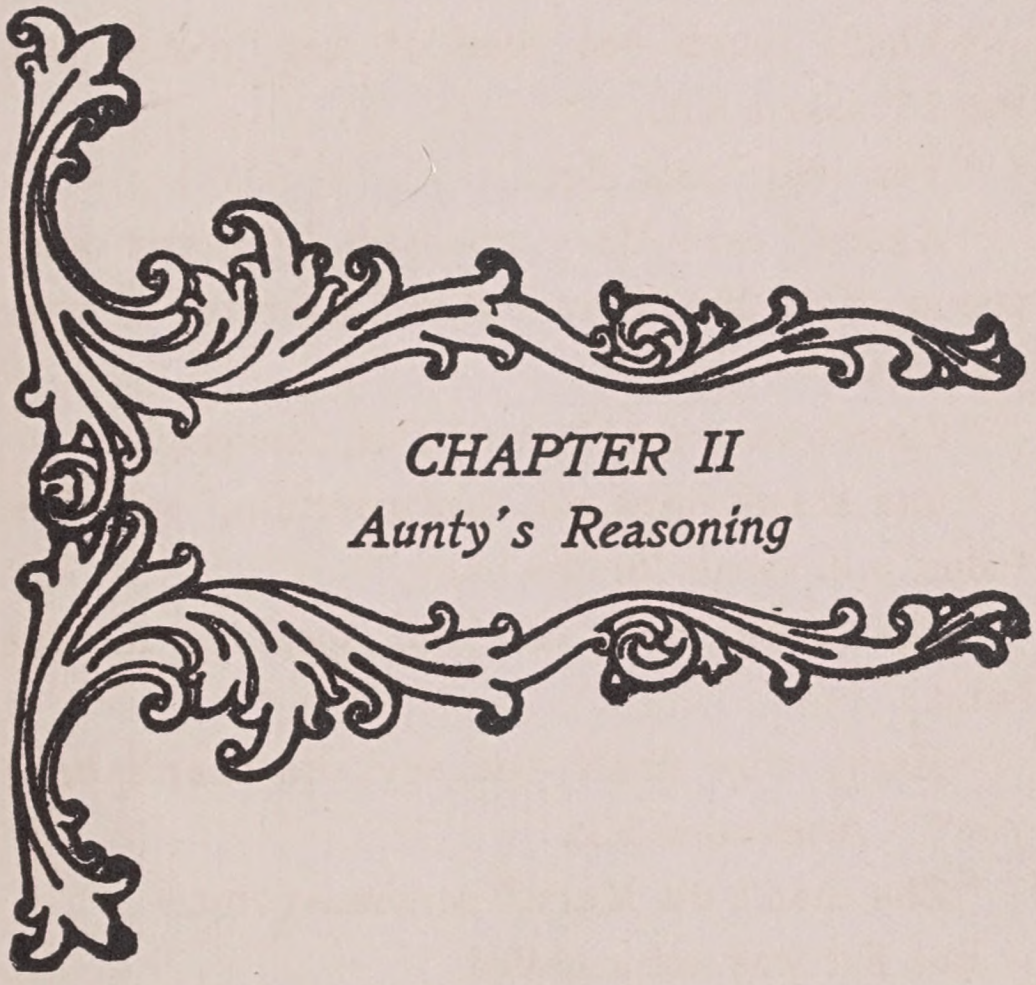
"Mary, why don't you say she shan't have you?" demanded Kit.

"Zhe zhan't dit Mary," screamed Buz.

But Kit was not satisfied.

"Mary is crying," she said. "Aunty, why don't you speak for her when you see that she's crying? Why don't you say that the fat lady shan't have her?"

"'Cause, honey," said aunty, "de fat lady is awful rich."



CHAPTER II

Aunty's Reasoning

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Aunty's Reasoning

WHEN Kit asked aunty why she did not say that the fat lady should not have Mary, and aunty, so mercilessly and mercenarily replied, "'Cause, honey, de fat lady is awful rich," little Miss Mary loosened herself from the black arms and made her way first to the place where her precious diary was secreted and then, carrying the book together with an ink bottle and the ebony-handled pen, she went on up to the garret.

"I am sure now that Cousin Cynthia is an old maid," she wrote in the book that her mamma had given her, "for no person but an old maid, or an ignorant person like aunty, would ever give people's children away to other people. Cousin Cynthia has given me away to Mrs. Pinner who lives five miles off, past the cross-roads, and aunty is glad because Mrs. Pinner is rich."

That evening the little girl talked quite seri-

ously to aunty on the subject of giving people's children away to other people, and was surprised to find how deeply the old woman had considered the question.

"Take it dis way, little Miss Mary," she said. "Here is you four chillen lef' in de world wid nobody to take keer you, for your Cousin Cynthy is certainy eetchin' to git back to Boston. Here you is, den. You ain't got no mamma an' you ain't got no papa an' you's jest bound to be a burden on somebody, shore's you live. Now, I say, ef any nice folks comes along an' wants to take keer you, let 'em. It's all right; it's jest as it should be, de Lord willin'. Ef I was your Cousin Cynthy I'd scour de neighborhood, selectin' de proper sort o' folks an' I'd give every one you away, for a fact I would. I wouldn't rest till I done give every one you away."

"Would you give Buz away?" asked Mary.

"'Deed I would," answered aunty, with alacrity, "'deed in double I would, but I'd be mighty keerful who I give him to. I'd never make de mistake o' givin' Buz to no ole particular people an' have him bringin' scand'lization on hissef. Yas, an' I'd give de baby away too an' I'd give

Miss Fusty-boots Kit way fur off from whar I give Buz."

"You are a cruel woman," said Mary.

The little girl was sitting by the kitchen table during this talk and aunty was in her green chair.

"Mary Daingerfield, what you call me cruel for?" snapped the old woman.

"Because you are," answered Mary. "If Buz and Kit are to be given away, I hope that they will live close together and see each other every day. I hope we all will be given away to people who live close together. Don't you know that children forget each other if they don't play together sometimes? Who will Cousin Cynthia give the baby to, I wonder!"

Aunty wondered also. "*You* is fixed," she said. "*You* is in clover. Dat ole Mr. Pinner is rollin' in riches, an' dat ole Mrs. Pinner gits ev'ry mortal thing she calls for. Dar ain't nobody b'longin' to 'em but a son an' de Lawd knows whar Dave Pinner's got to by dis time. He's ben to Africa an' Souf 'Merica an' New York City, I b'lieve. Some says de ole folks hears from him right 'long an' some says dey don't, dey's jest meckin' out. Once dey had a gal, five

years older'n Dave. You ought to be monstrous glad, little Miss Mary, dat de gal went to heaven when she was 'bout as big as you, fer dat episode done lef' Mrs. Pinner tender fer a little gal. Honey, I want tell you some'n, de Pinner meader, 'pon my soul I's tellin' de born troof, de Pinner meader is two mile long."

"I wish Mr. Dave Pinner would come home," said Mary, giving no thought to the lengthy meadow.

"Dat wouldn't fotch de little gal back," said aunty, philosophically, "would it? Dave Pinner ain't apt to turn up after all dese years, honey. His hawt ain't set on money, nohow. You best be satisfied de way things is. Little Miss Mary, look right here to me an' listen. Folks give you credit for havin' an ole haid on yo' shoulders. I knows it ain't as ole as you gits credit for, but yo' papa said you got de longest memory he ever seen, an' dar wan't no brag an' bluster 'bout him neida, an' dar wan't no end to yo' mamma trustin' you. I's yo' friend, yo' ole black aunty, who loves you fit to breck her hawt an' way down in her soul. De Pinners, as yo' own mamma would say, ef she wah here to-night, kin give you every

'vantage. You'll grow up to be a 'complished young lady. You'll have yo' silk dresses an' yo' ribbons an' yo' jewelry. You'll have yo' gold watch an' chain an' you'll ride in a kerridge all yo' born days. Dar certain'y ain't no call for you to be bodderin'."

"But I am bothering a whole lot," said the little girl, winking back the tears. "I don't care for old Mr. Pinner's money and I don't want to belong to old Mrs. Pinner. I am bothering about being separated from Kit and Buz and the baby. After awhile the baby won't know who I am."

"You is got a mighty ole haid on yo' shoulders!" cried aunty, admiringly.

"Won't it be awful?"

"Putty bad," said aunty, slowly.

Hope rose in the little girl's heart as she surveyed aunty's dismal countenance. With the old woman's powerful assistance she was very certain that matters could be arranged in such a manner as to keep the Daingerfield children together.

But the dismal countenance underwent a change, suddenly it glowed all over.

"No, little Miss Mary, dat ain't so," said aunty. "De baby will hear talk of you wharever he is. He'll be tole how you come to be Mrs. Pinner's little gal an' he'll grow up puffin' proud o' you. He'll look for you rollin' 'long de big road in dat two hoss kerridge an' he'll spy you out in de chuch an' tell ev'rybody near him dat Mrs. Pinner's little gal is his sister, Mary Daingerfield."

It seemed to Mary Daingerfield that that would be awful, too, but aunty was chuckling.

"I see Buz an' Kit pointin' you out too, an' tellin' folks dat Mrs. Pinner's little gal is own sister to de two of 'em," she continued, pride in her voice and in her beady eyes. "An' some time mebbe you might ask 'em all ovah to a pawty."

"If I ask them to a party I will lock them up in a closet and keep them," said Mary.

"De fat lady will be too smawt to let you hold de pawty while you's entertainin' sech feelin's as dat," declared aunty, laughing as if it were a great joke. "What she want have a boy like Buz in de house fer? Think she want somebody laughin' at her from mawnin' till

night? Buz betta be keerful or de Lawd'll pay him back by makin' him big as a borl. Mrs. Pinner didn't take no stock in Kit neida while I was stealin' a peep. She ain't struck on no little smawt-cake chillen. What she wants is a chile dat's pretty an' has got dark hair an' brown eyes, like her little gal's what's dead, an' dat sets round readin' an' dat writes in her diary. She took her selection mighty quick, an' you's up to de top o' de ladda ef you is on'y ten years ole."

"I supose you will be glad to get another place, aunty," said little Miss Mary, trying to speak coldly.

"How you know I'll be glad, Mary Dainger-field?" cried aunty. "How you know I'll be glad to git anodda place?"

"Because you are glad we are all going to be given away; because you want us all to be given away as soon as possible, that's why," retorted the little girl.

Aunty sat silent for a long while. Her voice was calm and philosophical when she again spoke.

"Ef you all is give to de right sort o' people I is glad," she said, solemnly, "glad for my soul;

but I do hope Miss Cynthy is keerful not to give Buz to no ole particular people an' have him bringin' scand'lization on hissef."

At that moment Buz was bringing scandalization on himself up-stairs where Cousin Cynthia was trying to put him to bed. They could hear him making a terrible noise, and after awhile, when they thought that things had quieted down, the kitchen door opened and he popped in.

The little fellow was in his night-drawers and was flourishing a long pasteboard sword.

"Ain't no zoldier on land now," he said, emphatically, "I'm a tommodore."

"What you talkin' 'bout, Buz?" asked aunty.

Mary explained that Buz meant that he was not going to be a soldier on land any more, that he was a commodore instead, and that a commodore was a soldier on the sea.

"Has you run yo' sword through yo' Cousin Cynthy?" inquired aunty.

Buz looked surprised. "Tommodores don't fight ladies," he said.

"Jest kicks away from 'em an' runs, I reckon," said aunty.

Buz smiled. He was such a pretty little boy

when he smiled, that you felt like putting your arms around him and giving him a kiss.

Dragging his pasteboard sword along the kitchen floor he went over to aunty and climbed into her lap.

"Tell me more about ole fat lady," he said. "Tell me more about little Miss Mary and ole fat lady."

Then the heroine of this little story knew that while she was in the garret, writing that dismal sentence in her diary, aunty had been treacherously telling Kit and Buz of the wonderful luck that had befallen her, and she knew that they, too, were glad.

"Tell me about the orzes," pleaded Buz.

"Law, Buz," cried aunty, "I ain't got de time; dar's Miss Cynthy aftah you. We's got to run an' git to bade." She gathered the boy in her arms and carried him where he belonged.

An hour afterward, when Kit was peacefully sleeping beside her sister, Cousin Cynthia came into the children's room. She wore her nightgown and her hair was falling about her shoulders. She looked very, very pretty.

"Are you awake, Mary?" she asked. She did

not wait for an answer but crossed the floor and knelt down by the bed. Presently her arm was around the little, wakeful girl.

"Don't cry, Mary," she said, "I am as sorry as you are, but I couldn't help it." Then Cousin Cynthia was crying too.

"I don't want to be rich," said Mary, as soon as she could speak.

"I know you don't," said Cousin Cynthia.

"I just want to live with Kit and Buz and the baby."

"I know you do," repeated Cousin Cynthia.

"I promised mamma that I would take care of Kit and Buz and the baby."

When little Mary Daingerfield told her Cousin Cynthia that, she felt the arm about her tightening.

By and by Cousin Cynthia said:

"Mamma did not know how things were going to be, Mary, mamma died believing that papa's life insurance policy would keep her dear little people together, and poor papa had let the policy run out. If mamma could speak to you and me to-night she would say that she was glad that you were to go to Mrs. Pinner's."

Mary did not know exactly what a life in-

surance policy was, although she understood that it was a sad thing to let it run out; but she felt sure that if her mamma were in the room she would declare that her little girl should never go to Mrs. Pinner's.

Then Cousin Cynthia went on to say that she would like nothing better than to be able to keep her cousin's children together, and that if she could manage to do it she certainly would, even if there were four Mrs. Pinners begging fiercely for them, but she was only an assistant in a school and had a difficult time making ends meet.

"When Mrs. Pinner comes for you, you will go quietly and like a little lady, won't you, Mary?" she asked. "You will not set the other children crying? You will go as if you were satisfied, won't you, Mary?"

Mary answered that she would go quietly and like a little lady, that she would not set the other children crying, but she did not promise to go as if she were satisfied.

"You know that I am doing the very best I can?" Cousin Cynthia then asked.

"Yes," said Mary, faintly, "but some day I will try to get us all together again."

"You dear little thing!" said Cousin Cynthia, and hugged her tightly, with both arms, like her mamma would have done.

The tender voice and the affectionate hug made Mary sorry that she had written in her diary that she was sure Cousin Cynthia was an old maid.

"Was papa a Yankee?" she asked, meekly.

"Yes, dear," said Cousin Cynthia. "Why?"

"A real Yankee?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then you must be glad that you are a Yankee too. You must be very proud of being a Yankee."

"I am," said Cousin Cynthia.

Then followed another long talk. In this talk Cousin Cynthia told the little girl that when she went to live with Mrs. Pinner, she must act as she knew her mamma and papa would wish to see her act, in which case she would be a dear little girl and Mr. and Mrs. Pinner would love her from the beginning. She told her that she would live in a fine house over at Hayfields and that no doubt she would wear very beautiful little dresses, but that she must never grow vain.

She said that Mr. and Mrs. Pinner, being old, were likely to shower attention upon a child that they took into their house, but she believed that Mary had too much sense to allow herself to be spoiled; that she was very glad, indeed, on this account, that Mrs. Pinner had not chosen Kit.

When Cousin Cynthia finished her talk and went away, Mary cried again, she could not help it, and she wished and wished that Dave Pinner would come home and tell his mother that she should not bring a little girl to Hayfields.

It seemed to her that Dave Pinner must be as big as a giant, the fat lady was so enormous, and that he could have his own way with his mother; most men and boys had their own way with their mothers in all the books that she had ever read. Even Buz often had his own way with his mamma.

After she had wished that Dave Pinner would come home and tell his mother that she should not bring a little girl to that great house, she turned over and looked at the moonlight falling on the floor. It was soft and beautiful and she thought again of Cousin Cynthia in her white night-gown with her hair loose over her shoulders,

and she put her thoughts into words and spoke them in a low voice:

"I do not believe that Cousin Cynthia is an old maid."

Sometimes the best of us think different thoughts at night from what we do in the daytime; but in the broad light of the following day Mary Daingerfield made this entry in her diary :

"I do not believe that Cousin Cynthia is an old maid," and went on to write:

"I am glad that if Cousin Cynthia could make ends meet she would take care of all of us and keep us together.

"It must be in the Daingerfield family not to be able to make ends meet.

"But if aunty were not determined that we all should be given away, I think that I could very likely make ends meet.

"Aunty says she knows that both Mr. and Mrs. Pinner will come for me, and I suppose they will. Both of them will be laughing. I am to go quietly like a lady. I promised Cousin Cynthia that I would. And I promised that I would not set the other children crying. There is no danger

of that. If Kit and Buz cry it will be because they want to go to Mrs. Pinner's, too. Aunty has been telling them big tales about everything over at Hayfields. I don't know whether she was ever there or not but Kit and Buz think that she was."

"Mary! Mary!" called Kit, "where are you?"

"I'm busy," Mary called back.

Then Kit was in the room.

"If you want your diary to go into your trunk," she said, "you better give it to me. Cousin Cynthia is ready to shut it up."

The precious book was handed over, and Kit ran with it to the trunk and put it in. When she returned Buz was with her.

"You will have a lovely room to sleep in," said Kit; "aunty told me so. There will be pictures all over the walls, pictures of little girls and boys and dogs and cats and everything."

"Pictures of orzes," said Buz.

"Yes, of course, there will be pictures of horses," said Kit.

"Mary will be a tween, won't she, Tit?" asked Buz.

Buz was very fond of the queens in the fairy tales, whether they were good or bad.

"Mary won't be a queen at all," said Kit, in a jealous voice, "she'll just be Mary Daingerfield, the same as she is now."

"She won't, she will be a tween," cried Buz, and he ran to Kit and slapped her.

"I thought commodores didn't fight ladies," said Kit. "Aunty says you told her, Buz Daingerfield, that commodores didn't fight ladies."

"You ain't a lady," said Buz.

"I am a lady! I am a lady!" screamed Kit, and Buz would have slapped her again only Mary caught him about the waist and held him.

He struggled and then grew amicable, turned up his little round face and inquired, "Will you dive me a big orze, Mary?"

"Commodores don't need horses," called Kit, from the top of the banisters.

"Won't be tommodore if tan't have a orze," said Buz, in a fury. "No, won't be a tommodore if tan't have a orze, Miss Tit."

"You had better be a commodore," said Kit, "if you ever want to see the Atlantic Ocean. I suppose you're going to run the horse that Mary

sends you from Mrs. Pinner's right straight into the Atlantic Ocean, are you, Buz?"

Buz retorted that he would if he wanted to; yes, if he wanted to, he would make his horse gallop straight into the Atlantic Ocean, he wasn't afraid of no old horse, and he wasn't afraid of no old Atlantic Ocean.

"Kit," said Mary, gravely, "you ought not to tease Buz. Some day he will be a soldier either on the land or the sea, and I know he will be a brave soldier."

"If you give Buz a horse," said Kit, "you've got to give me something."

"You want a lamb, don't you, Tit?" inquired Buz, who was restored to good humor and eager for new possessions in his household.

"Yes," said Kit, "I want a lamb and I want it to be white. I want a whole lot of other things, too."

"Pigeons!" cried Buz, ecstatically.

"Yes, pigeons," agreed Kit. "Aunty says they've fan-tail pigeons. I want that kind, a whole lot of 'em."

"And puppies," suggested Buz.

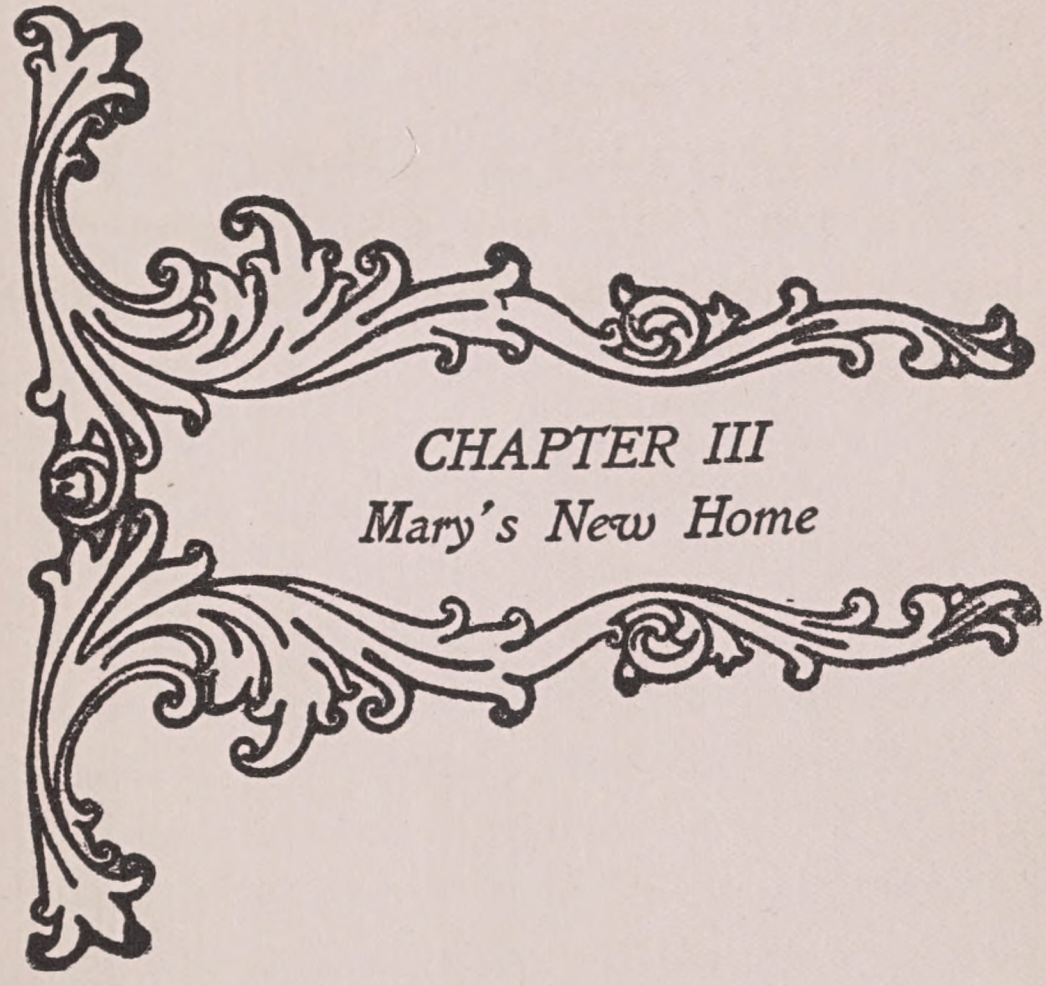
"Oh, yes," cried Kit, "I want some puppies

very much. One anyway, Mary, a little spotted puppy about this long." Kit measured a very short space in the air.

Buz came very close to the brown-eyed sister who had let him gently out of her arms. Encasing her in a hug, he asked:

"When are you doin' to do, Mary?"

"She won't tell," said Kit, "because she's homesick already, but I know—she is going to go to-morrow."



CHAPTER III

Mary's New Home

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Mary's New Home

AUNTY was right in her surmise that both Mr. and Mrs. Pinner would come for Mary, and Mary was right, too, for the old gentleman and the old lady were laughing. They seemed to think that it was a fine thing for a little girl to step into the big carriage and exchange the home at Willowbrook for the home at Hayfields, but they thought, too, that it was a fine thing for them to get possession of such a pretty little girl, and they conversed freely for a while on the subject of these marvelous bargains.

The old gentleman was driving, although a colored boy sat beside him. If the boy had held the reins and had paid no more attention to his horses than Mr. Pinner was doing, he would have been rebuked severely. Job had his thoughts on the subject, and the boss was illustrating his own convictions: a person *could* drive with the back of the head to the horses.

"Yes, father," said Mrs. Pinner, complacently, "we've got a nice little girl to carry[1] home with us."

"I wonder if she likes candy?" said Mr. Pinner.

"Most little girls like candy," returned the old lady. "*I* wonder if she would like a little sewing-basket with thimble and scissors and needle-case?"

They treated Mary as if she were a little bit of a girl. Buz would have laughed if he had heard them.

But suddenly Mary felt as if she were a little bit of a girl. She had come away quietly, as she had promised her Cousin Cynthia she would do; she had not set the children crying; but she could not pretend to this old lady and gentleman that she was satisfied to leave the home in Willowbrook, she could not do it. The troublesome frog jumped into her throat and she looked far out at the waving corn and the quivering leaves and the flickering shadows of the beautiful summer morning.

[1] To CARRY—Used in certain country districts in the sense of to take.

"Think she's quite as robust as she might be, mother?" asked Mr. Pinner. "Wouldn't it be wise to put the little sewing-basket back in the closet for a while? Wouldn't a slide down the straw-stack now and then be of more benefit?"

"She's a mite homesick, that's the matter," said Mrs. Pinner. "She'll have to get used to us, father, and she can't do it in a day, either. She's lived in a rumpus, you know."

"We've a great drove of little ducks at our house, Mary," said Mr. Pinner, "and I can't tell you how many turkeys. Mother, now if she wants to help you feed the turkeys, you'll let her?"

"Oh, yes, I'll let her," said Mrs. Pinner.

"Tell her how long you've been raising turkeys, mother," ordered the old gentleman, but, although the old lady laughed, she cried out, "Pshaw!" discouragingly.

Mr. Pinner, however, was not the kind of man to be discouraged.

"She's been raising them ever since her first year at Hayfields," he said. "All her little turkeys and all her big turkeys and all her turkey eggs are down on paper. I wonder now, if you

were given the numbers, if you couldn't work out the examples and give us the total."

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Pinner, before Mary could answer. "You'll scare the child, father. How old are you, Mary?"

"I was ten years old on the fifteenth of July," said Mary.

"And I know your mamma didn't send you to the public school," said the old lady, emphatically, "for there are too many rough boys attending the public schools in these parts. Mr. Pinner, you wait till she goes to school before you put such terrible arithmetic questions to her."

"I went to school to mamma and papa," said Mary, in a meek little voice, "and I think I could work the example for Mr. Pinner if I had a pencil and paper and could go into a quiet room."

Mr. and Mrs. Pinner laughed so heartily that they shook the carriage, and even the colored boy giggled.

"Isn't it delightful to hear a child talk like that?" said Mrs. Pinner at the end of her laugh. "It'll make us young again, father."

"Do you think the spare-room will be quiet enough?" asked Mr. Pinner.

"If it won't, maybe Dave's will answer the purpose," said the old lady.

"Or she could go into the parlor, for a pencil never drops any blots. But my stars! Mother, isn't this the little girl that keeps a diary? Hasn't she written whole pages with pen and ink and never made a blot? Isn't that what the other little girl said?"

"Now, quit making fun," said Mrs. Pinner. "Somebody doesn't half like it. What is the other little girl's name, Mary?"

"Katharine Daingerfield," said Mary.

"How old is *she?*"

"Seven."

"And I reckon maybe you do keep a diary. Don't you?"

"Yes, I keep a diary," said Mary.

"Well, don't you let Mr. Pinner see it," said the old lady. "He's just dying to know what's in it. He has too much curiosity for an old gray-headed farmer, and we will have to get even with him somehow."

"I would certainly like to see that diary!" exclaimed Mr. Pinner.

But Mary told herself, then and there, that a

diary was a very personal affair. She might possibly in time show parts of it to Kit and Buz, and other parts to aunty; she might read the whole of it to the baby when he was old enough to understand, but she would never under any circumstances show her diary to Mr. and Mrs. Pinner; they need not expect it.

"What is the name of the little fat boy who sat on the sofa and made fun of me?" inquired Mrs. Pinner, pleasantly.

Mary gave a start. She had hoped that the old lady had not noticed that Buz was laughing at her.

"His name is John Edward Daingerfield," she said.

"John Edward!" repeated Mrs. Pinner, disapprovingly. "Well, I say that's a shame!"

"We call him Buz," explained Mary.

"Buz is a whole heap better than John Edward," said Mrs. Pinner. "Of course when he's big he can write his name out and John Edward won't be half bad for a man, but I'm glad you call him Buz while he's so cute and little. How old is Buz?"

"Nearly four," answered Mary.

"We saw the baby too, mother," reminded Mr. Pinner. "You mustn't go and forget the baby. You must ask about the whole of 'em now you've started."

"How old is the baby?" asked Mrs. Pinner.

"He's a year old, but he has only four teeth, and he's named Sterling Frederick Mortimer."

"Gracious alive!" cried Mrs. Pinner.

"We call him baby," explained the little girl, adding proudly, "One of our great-grandfathers, named Sterling Frederick Mortimer, was an officer in the Revolutionary War."

"Isn't that nice," said the old gentleman.

"It certainly is," said the old lady. "I must write to Dave again."

"Listen, Mary," said Mr. Pinner, "I am going to tell something on mother. She has a great, big, middle-aged son up in New York City and she's trying her best to make him jealous of a certain little girl not a mile away from her. No, indeed, Dave Pinner never had a grandfather fighting in the Revolutionary War."

"Mine was *killed* in the Revolutionary War," said Mary. "You tell him that, Mrs. Pinner." She was so glad that Dave's people did hear

from him and she hoped the big middle-aged son would get furiously jealous.

It was a warm day and everybody was tired out when the horses turned in at a great painted gate, that opened and closed automatically, the kind of gate that only rich people have. There was a long lane with grass on either side of the hard white road and then you came to the house. It was an old-time stone house with dormer windows peeping out of the roof, and it stood in a shady yard. A dog tossed itself into the air, barked and subsided, and a colored woman appeared at the side of the house and stood like a statue. It seemed quiet and lonely.

"Here we are, here we are, little girl," said Mr. Pinner, and he lifted Mary out before he gave his hand to Mrs. Pinner.

The old lady stepped from the carriage very slowly.

"Well," she said, "I'm glad those trips are over but I'm not sorry that we took them."

"We'll feel better when we get our dinner," said Mr. Pinner. "My! but it is a hot day! Job," he called back to the colored boy, "mind you stand the horses in the branch and let them

get good and wet before they put their heads to the water. Well, well, well, we've a cool, comfortable home to be thankful for, that's certain."

Mr. Pinner spoke the truth. Over at the little house in Willowbrook aunty was, no doubt, grumbling about the heat and Cousin Cynthia was wondering whether it was wiser to darken the rooms to keep out the sun or to open the shutters to let in the air. All the windows were open in the dining-room at Hayfields, and the cool air came in, and the sunshine was away off beyond the shady yard.

There was an extra good dinner served that day at Hayfields, and the coffee-pot beside Mrs. Pinner's plate was the largest coffee-pot that Mary Daingerfield had even seen. The old lady had the colored woman remove it as soon as she had poured out the coffee. She put a very little coffee in Mary's cup and filled it up with cream. Mr. and Mrs. Pinner had large dinner plates and large cups and saucers while Mary had a little plate and a little cup and saucer, white with gold rims around them. They were very pretty.

All during the dinner the two kind-hearted old people showed entirely too much attention to the

little girl for her comfort. When the meal was over Mrs. Pinner said:

"We will get rested, father, and then we will show Mary the house. She and I are going to lie down in the spare-room this afternoon, for a certain little room in this house will have to be seen for the first time with rested eyes."

The spare-room was large and cool like the dining-room. Its muslin curtains were flapping. Mary lay on the big bed beside Mrs. Pinner. She was wearing a little night-gown that did not belong to her, and she was thinking how pleased Cousin Cynthia would be, if the breeze that was flapping the muslin curtains would come in through the windows of the little house at Willowbrook.

"I don't believe you are going to sleep a bit," remarked Mrs. Pinner. "Is this the way you do at home?"

"I don't always go to sleep," answered Mary.

"You lie awake and think, don't you?" asked the old lady, curiously. She realized that this little girl was not an ordinary child. The other one, Katharine, would have tumbled over at once and gone to sleep.

"What are you thinking of now, Mary?" she inquired.

Mary answered with a question: "Is it cooler in Boston than it is at Willowbrook?"

"Honey, I don't know," said Mrs. Pinner, honestly. "I've never heard much about Boston. I know it's terrible hot in New York City where Dave lives."

"Cousin Cynthia lives in Boston," said Mary.

"She does?" said Mrs. Pinner. "She's a fine little woman. Mr. Pinner and I were both very much taken with her. I hope she gets good homes for the other children. So she lives in Boston?"

Then Mrs. Pinner turned over and went to sleep. She slept for a long time and she snored. When she awoke, the little girl was lying on her back, evidently still thinking.

Feeling the old lady's eyes upon her Mary asked: "If Cousin Cynthia gives Kit and Buz and the baby away, will she let me know?"

"Bless her little heart!" cried Mrs. Pinner, "if it isn't always something about Kit and Buz and the baby. I will see that you get to know when your Cousin Cynthia gives them away."

"Thank you," said the demure little maid.

"Now, Mary," said the old lady, "I want you to make yourself thoroughly at home here with Mr. Pinner and me. We're old people and we haven't had a child in the house since Dave was a youngster. If we don't think to give you what you'd like to have, you must ask for it. Now, if you were home what would you do?"

"I would get up and take a bath," said Mary.

"Certainly, of course," said Mrs. Pinner. "But did you have a bath-room over at your house?"

Mary realized, while a flush stole over her face, that Mrs. Pinner regarded the house in Willowbrook as a poor little place, and so it was, and she wondered how she could ever have imagined that they were rich.

"No, we haven't any bath-room," she acknowledged, "but we have a bath-tub, and in the summer we have a little place back of the pump with sheets around it. The tub is in there. You can take a good bath just the same as if you had a bath-room."

"Certainly, of course," said Mrs. Pinner. "But how about the winter-time?"

"We have the tub in the house, then."

"How often, Mary," asked Mrs. Pinner, gravely, "do you take a bath in the winter-time?"

"How often?" asked Mary.

"In the winter-time?" repeated Mrs. Pinner.

"I take it early in the morning in the winter," said Mary.

"Every morning?"

"Of course," said Mary.

"I thought maybe you did," said Mrs. Pinner, "and I'm glad of it. I'm glad that you belong to that kind of people. Some folks," she added, "bathe only on Saturday night. I don't believe you even knew that."

"Aunty bathes only on Saturday night," said Mary.

"Who's aunty?"

"She's our servant. She's black."

"Well," explained the old lady, "there are people in the world a heap higher than aunty who bathe only on Saturday night; but it isn't right; they'd feel better and they'd be healthier if they were to bathe two or three times a week, anyway. We have a nice bath-room here down

at the end of the hall. When you're in your own little room you'll have to run up the steps but you won't mind that, and in the winter-time the hall is heated. We put in a furnace and the bath-room about ten years ago when we thought, from what Dave said in his letters, that he might be coming home, and we didn't want him to find us too old-timey."

Mrs. Pinner sighed.

"I should think your son would like to come home," said Mary.

"Well, I should, too," said Mrs. Pinner, turning about and looking straight into the little girl's brown eyes. "It's a fine thing for a man to manage a great big farm like this, and Mr. Pinner would hand it over to Dave any day and be glad to do it. But Dave always was one of the restless sort of fellows, and he started out young to see the world. He's done well every place he's been. He's kept himself right along and paid all his expenses. From the first he said he could do it. He paid his way in South America and in the West and everywhere else. He says that when he's ready to settle down, he'll come home and take the farm.

About ten years ago, from what he said in his letters, we thought that he was going to marry and come home. I wrote Dave about the furnace and the bath-room but—I don't know—I think he had a good deal of trouble; anyway, the next we heard he was in South Africa. I think if Dave were to step right in here and see his father, he would decide to come home and manage. Mr. Pinner worries a good deal over little things and he's old enough to take his rest." She sighed again, and then she laughed out brightly. "I didn't get a little girl to tell my troubles to," she said. "I got her to make things lively for two old people. I know you want to splash around in that big bath-tub. Come, I'll go with you and show you how to turn on the water. You mustn't let too much water in the tub. I don't want you to be in any danger when you're taking a bath."

It was a dainty bath-room, well fitted up. Mrs. Pinner let the water run until the tub was about a fifth full then she turned the spigot off.

Mary gave a little laugh.

"Well," cried the old lady, "have I done something to make you laugh at last? I'm glad

of it, although it almost seemed as if it must have been the other one, that little Katharine or Kit. There! I didn't mean to turn you solemn again in such a hurry. What made you laugh? Was it because I didn't let enough water in the tub?"

"We have it full to the top at home," explained Mary.

"You do? And no spigot, child? Who pumped the water?" demanded Mrs. Pinner.

"The pump is easy," said Mary. "When aunty gets tired Kit and I finish. Sometimes Kit makes aunty tired for she will ride on the pump handle. When Buz bathes the water is almost up to his neck."

"And he doesn't holler?" asked the old lady.

"No, indeed," answered Mary, proudly. "Buz is going to be a soldier. He is not afraid of anything. He never thinks about getting drowned. He used to intend to be a soldier on land but now he says he is going to be a commodore. I guess he will because great-grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War."

"He must be a smart little fellow," said Mrs.

Pinner, appreciatively. "And he isn't four years old yet?"

"Buz is three years and nine months old," said the little girl.

"And who told him anything about a commodore?"

"Oh, he heard people talking. Buz is awful smart. He is smarter than Kit. Kit makes terrible capital letters. Papa said they looked like Greek. Buz says that he reads things in the paper."

"It certainly must have been hard for your papa and mamma to leave you all," said the old lady. "I really think that's enough water in the tub. I'd feel anxious if it was full up. It would be different if Kit and Buz were with you, for there'd be some one to holler if anything was to happen. Now, honey, don't you ever lock the door on yourself when you're in the bath-room. It mightn't be safe. After you're through, come right back to the spare-room. The white dress you wore over here is spick and span and we won't bother about opening your trunk until night. Did you know the gown you have on belonged to my little daughter who died?"

"I thought it did," said Mary.

"Who told you about her?" asked Mrs. Pinner, delaying at the bath-room door.

"Aunty."

"The black woman over at your house? What did she say?"

"She said that your little girl went to heaven when she was about as big as I am."

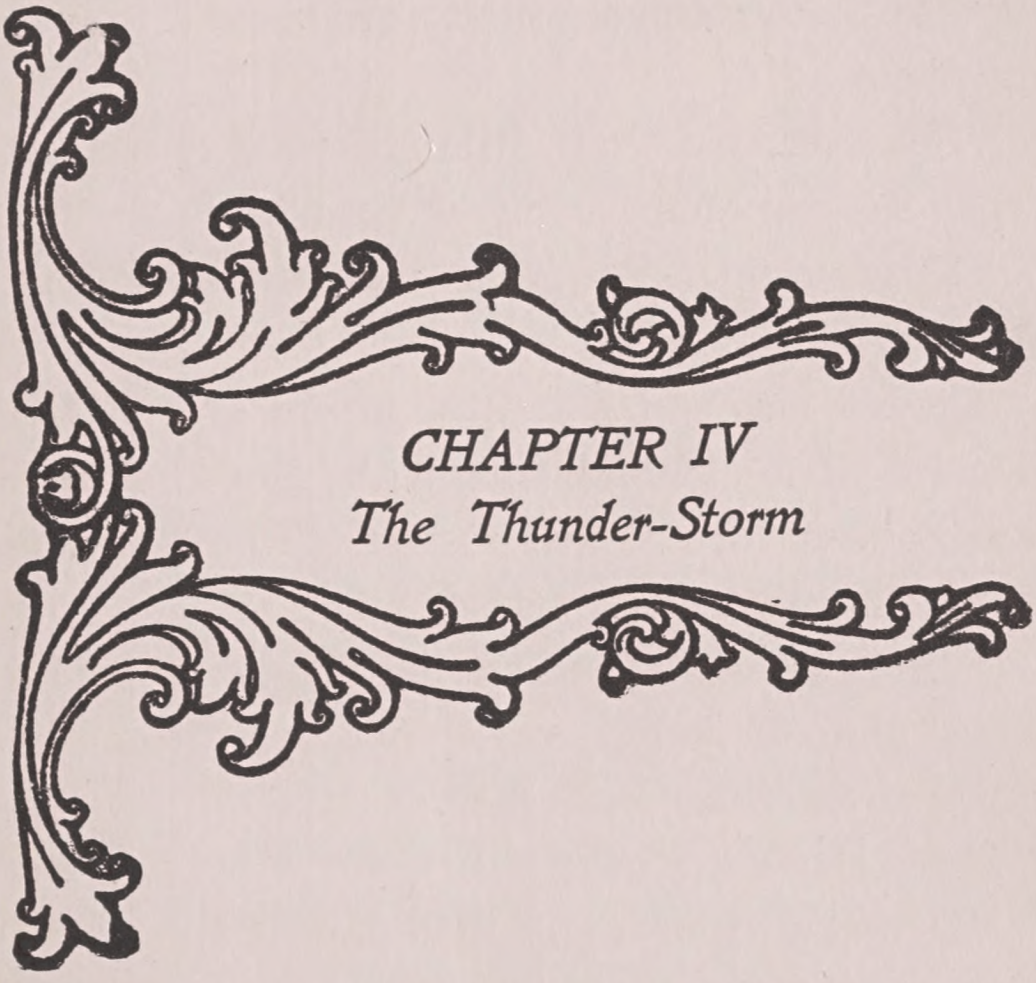
"That's right. The gown just fits you, doesn't it, Mary?"

The old lady's eyes and the brown eyes of the demure little girl both sought the gown. There was no need for a verbal answer. To all appearances the gown was a perfect fit.

"Did the black woman tell you her name?" asked the old lady, raising her eyes from the gown to the sober little face.

Mary shook her head.

"It was so long ago," said Mrs. Pinner. "I reckon the folks who didn't love her would have to look at her stone to remember. Well, I'll go away and let you take your bath, some other time I'll tell you her name and all about her."



CHAPTER IV

The Thunder-Storm

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If the water had been up to the top of the tub, and if Kit and Buz and the well-loved baby had been back there in the big spare-room tumbling over the bed, how delightful everything would have been!

"Then we would go through the house," said Mary to herself, "and *I* would carry the baby."

An hour later she was going through the house, with Mr. Pinner on one side and Mrs. Pinner on the other.

"I want you to show her the picture, mother," said Mr. Pinner, when they all reached the parlor. He walked over to a window and drew up the blind. "There, can you see?"

"*I* can see all right, father," said Mrs. Pinner, gently, "and young eyes are better than mine."

"What do you see, Mary?" asked the old gentleman.

"I see a picture," said Mary.

"A picture of what?" he asked gently.

"A picture of a little girl."

"Do you see her plainly?"

"Yes, I see her very plainly."

"Can you tell that her eyes are brown?"

Mary looked attentively. "They're painted brown," she said.

"And her hair?"

"It's painted brown, too."

"Who do you think that little girl is?"

"She knows," said Mrs. Pinner, nodding sagaciously.

"Yes, I know," said Mary, "it's Mrs. Pinner's little girl."

"And Mr. Pinner's, too," said the old lady, softly.

The old gentleman turned his eyes to the picture on the wall. It looked blurred from where he stood. Then he gave his attention to the little girl gazing obediently at the painting. He could see very well that her hair was brown, and that it was curly. She was a slim little girl and tall, perhaps, for ten years. The other little girl had been very tall for nine. The little girl in the picture had gone out of the old house and left a

"It's Mrs. Pinner's little girl"

loneliness behind, even though the boy was frolicking over the floor. The little girl looking at the picture had come to a quieter house than that.

"Tell her, mother," he said, with a huskiness in his voice, "that everything the other one was to have, she's to have; there's to be no half measure about it. Tell her that *she* is Mrs. Pinner's little girl."

The old lady laid her hand tenderly on the shapely brown head.

"She's Mr. Pinner's little girl, too," she said. "Now, father, we had best show her her room."

Kit had said that Mary would have a beautiful room over at Mrs. Pinner's, but Kit had never dreamed of such a very beautiful little room as the one to which Mr. and Mrs. Pinner led Mary. It was on the parlor floor and it had two doors and two windows. One of the doors opened into the back part of the front hall and the other door opened into the bed-chamber occupied by the old lady and gentleman. Outside the two windows you could see a blooming bed of roses and away off the spring-house with vines all over it. You could catch a glimpse of the near end of the two-

mile meadow, and a stretch of woods. Inside the room there were many things to look at: a little chamber suit of white with painted roses trailing across the front of bureau and wash-stand and above the pillows, a little white rocking-chair, with roses on the back and seat, and a footstool with a crimson cover. There was a dainty couch and beautiful new rugs. If Buz had been standing in the doorway, he would have declared that Mary *was* a "tween."

"Father selected the furniture from a catalogue," said Mrs. Pinner, in high good humor, "and he ordered it shipped the same day. I never knew goods to get here so soon."

"I telegraphed the order," explained Mr. Pinner.

"And had them sent by express," said the old lady.

She gazed serenely about. "The suit certainly does look well," she said. "I was afraid it was one of those things that show up so much prettier in the book. I always get so fooled on flowers." She cast a swift glance out at the mass of blooming roses. "It seems to me that growing flowers are never half so pretty as they are in the books.

The bureau there shows up finer than it did in the catalogue. Mary, what do you think of your room?"

"What does she say?" asked Mr. Pinner, for the old gentleman was a little deaf and Mary's answer was very low.

"She says she likes it," cried Mrs. Pinner, cheerfully. "I knew she would."

"And there's her trunk," said Mr. Pinner. "My! but that's a big trunk." He was laughing, of course. "Who's going to do the unpacking, mother? Who'll undertake such a tremendous job?"

"Now don't you be making fun of anybody's trunk, Mr. Pinner," said Mrs. Pinner. "Mary and I won't have it, mind! We'll see to the unpacking of that trunk ourselves, and we'll see to it right."

"If the contents don't fill up the little bureau drawers and the closet, we must see to filling them up," said the old gentleman, generously.

He had a way of thrusting his right hand into the pocket where he kept his pocketbook, and it seemed to little Mary Daingerfield as if he were always ready to spend money.

"I'll foot the bills," he said, with a laugh.

"Of course you will, father," said Mrs. Pinner. "If you hadn't intended to be kind and generous you wouldn't have had the right to fetch a little girl here to Hayfields. She takes her bath every day in the winter-time."

"She does!" said Mr. Pinner.

"Early in the morning in the winter-time," explained the old lady.

"She does!" repeated the old gentleman.

"I hope that Mary will like the other piece of furniture that's coming, father," said Mrs. Pinner, "and I hope it turns out as nice as the one we saw in the book."

"I hope so, I hope so," said Mr. Pinner. "If it doesn't come up to the mark, we'll ship it back. It was bought on those conditions. I have come to the conclusion that that is the only sensible way to buy."

"When do you think it will get here?" asked the old lady.

"It will be here this week," answered Mr. Pinner. "If it isn't I'll know the reason why. Where will be the place to set it, mother?"

"Father, hush!" ordered Mrs. Pinner. "You'll

have me telling right out what it is, and you know I don't want to do it. I don't want this little girl to know what it is till it gets here. If you and I are disappointed in it, there's no need for her to be. We'll find a place for it when it comes."

"It might look well between the windows," suggested Mr. Pinner.

Mrs. Pinner shook her head.

"You'll be telling what it is, yourself, father, if you keep on," she said. "Here is Mary looking between the windows wondering what will fit. Honey, a great many things will fit between the windows, a rocking-chair or a table or a couch. So many, indeed, that if I were you I wouldn't trouble my brain about it; I'd make up my mind to wait and see what it is when it comes."

Yes, a great many things would fit between the windows, but Mary knew that the piece of furniture was not a rocking-chair or a table or a couch, for there was the rocking-chair and there was the table and there was the pretty little couch.

"Kit would guess a whole lot of things," she said.

"What's that?" cried Mr. Pinner.

"Nothing, father," said Mrs. Pinner. "She's just talking about the other little girl."

"Oh!" said Mr. Pinner. "What does she say about the other little girl?"

"She says that the other little girl would guess a whole lot of things, that's all. We had better go now; she's seen the room."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Pinner, "so the other little girl would guess a whole lot of things? I'll be bound she would! Now, look here, Mary, can't you give a guess?"

"Mrs. Pinner doesn't want me to," said Mary.

"She's just the best little girl that ever was," said the old lady. "No, honey, I don't want you to guess. I think it's a good way to spoil things. A body is apt to guess something that's better than the real thing."

"You said that she'd like this better than anything," said Mr. Pinner.

"Well, I think she will," said Mrs. Pinner, "if you don't get her to hungering for something that'll fit easier between the two windows."

"If there's anything she'd rather have, she can

have it," said Mr. Pinner. "We're not going to be stingy with her, mother."

"He has never been stingy with anybody in his life, Mary," said Mrs. Pinner, "and it's just the greatest wonder to folks the way he's prospered. Most rich people are kind of close, you know."

"Tut, tut, don't be singing my praises, wife," said Mr. Pinner.

"Well, you aren't stingy anyway," said Mrs. Pinner.

"That sounds more natural," said Mr. Pinner. "Your tone insinuates that there's a whole lot of other things the matter with me. Little girl, do you see them?"

"Well, I know you aren't religious," said Mrs. Pinner, "and there's no use my pretending that you are."

Mrs. Pinner's words, or her expression, which was grave and severe, set the old gentleman laughing.

"Shame on you, father!" cried the old lady, "and to ask Mary such a question as that! Of course, she doesn't see anything the matter with you."

The beautiful day ended in a wild evening. A storm came up early, causing the trees in the woods to clash and crash, and then tore furiously along through the meadow.

Mrs. Pinner did not relish a thunder-storm. The rain was needed for the crops, she said, but certainly there was no need for the thunder and the lightning. She had reproved Mr. Pinner for not being a religious man but she certainly did not talk like a religious woman.

"The lightning is terrible dangerous," she declared, "but the thunder scares a body even more than the lightning. If I were a little bit of a woman, I dare say I'd be one of the kind that crawls in between two feather beds; but I'd smother if I'd attempt any such caper, and it would take a full team to pull me out."

"Mother, you'll scare the child," said Mr. Pinner. "Mind how you talk."

"I'm not afraid of thunder," said Mary. "No one at our house is afraid of thunder but aunty."

"You're just scared at the lightning, then, are you?" asked Mrs. Pinner.

"Nobody at our house is afraid of the lightning either, except aunty," said the little girl.

"Mary," said Mrs. Pinner, "you're living here now, and you can't boast like that. Mr. Pinner is fearful lest all the cattle will be struck and the barn'll go, and as for me my limbs are fairly trembling under me. That's the way it fares with the folks in your house. In the kitchen things are no better: the women have their aprons over their heads, I'm mortal certain, and the black boy is hid in the closet."

"I meant at mamma's house," said Mary, and her lips began to quiver.

"Come here and sit on my lap," ordered Mrs. Pinner, "and for gracious sake, don't cry! My heart's in a frightful palpitation."

"I would think of something else if I were you," advised Mary.

"Wait till you go to school," said the old lady, "wait till you study philosophy. After that you will never think of anything but the thunder-storm itself when it's raging. I was pleased to death when I read about fixing up a little stool with glass feet, the glass being a non-conductor. And there was to be a chair with the same kind of feet. I thought it would be grand. You were to occupy the chair and hold

your feet on the stool, and have the two of them in the middle of the floor. I studied that paragraph over and over and I said to the girl next to me that I was going to buy myself a chair and a stool as soon as I got home, and be comfortable during storms all the rest of my life."

"Couldn't you do it?" asked Mary. "Wouldn't your father buy you the stool and the chair?"

"Mother," said Mr. Pinner, "please don't tell the child the rest of that story."

But Mrs. Pinner kept steadily on. "There was another paragraph to the lesson," she said, "and the truth of it sank into my soul though I was only fourteen years old. You can seat yourself on a chair, Mary, with the glass at the end of the legs and you can put your feet on the stool also finished off with the non-conductors; you can take up your position in the middle of the floor, and for all that the lightning may come and strike you dead."

"Can you see the cattle, mother?" asked Mr. Pinner, anxious to change the subject.

"I'm not looking," returned Mrs. Pinner.

"I've got this little girl to take care of. Honey, do you mean to say that you would go there to the window and look out and not be afraid of either the thunder or the lightning?"

"I would not be afraid," said Mary, and it seemed to her all of a sudden that she was a very brave little girl.

"Then you go and look while I shut my eyes," said the old lady, "for the lightning is certainly something fearful. You tell Mr. Pinner if you see the cattle. Is all the young stock down in the meadow, father?"

"All but the two colts," said the old gentleman, "and I don't know that they're any better off. They're in the back pasture, under the walnuts, of course."

"And the walnuts are high and will be sure to attract," said Mrs. Pinner, dismally.

Mary went across to the window. From the sitting-room also one had a view of the near end of the two-mile meadow.

"I see something," said the little girl.

"Father, she sees something," said Mrs. Pinner.

"What do you think it is?" inquired Mr. Pinner.

"I think it is a horse," said Mary, "but maybe it might be a cow. It's running."

"Toward the barn?" asked Mr. Pinner, excitedly. "Does it look as if it would like to get through the gate? Mother, I've a mind to go out and open that gate. It's a shame for the men to act the way they do during a storm."

"They can't help it," said Mrs. Pinner. "They're human beings if they are black, and I know what it is to be frightened. Father, don't you dare to stir out of this house unless you want me to die on the spot. If you come near you can hear my heart thumping."

Thunder rolled along the heavens, a frightful clap broke above the barn, and lightning flashed through the sitting-room.

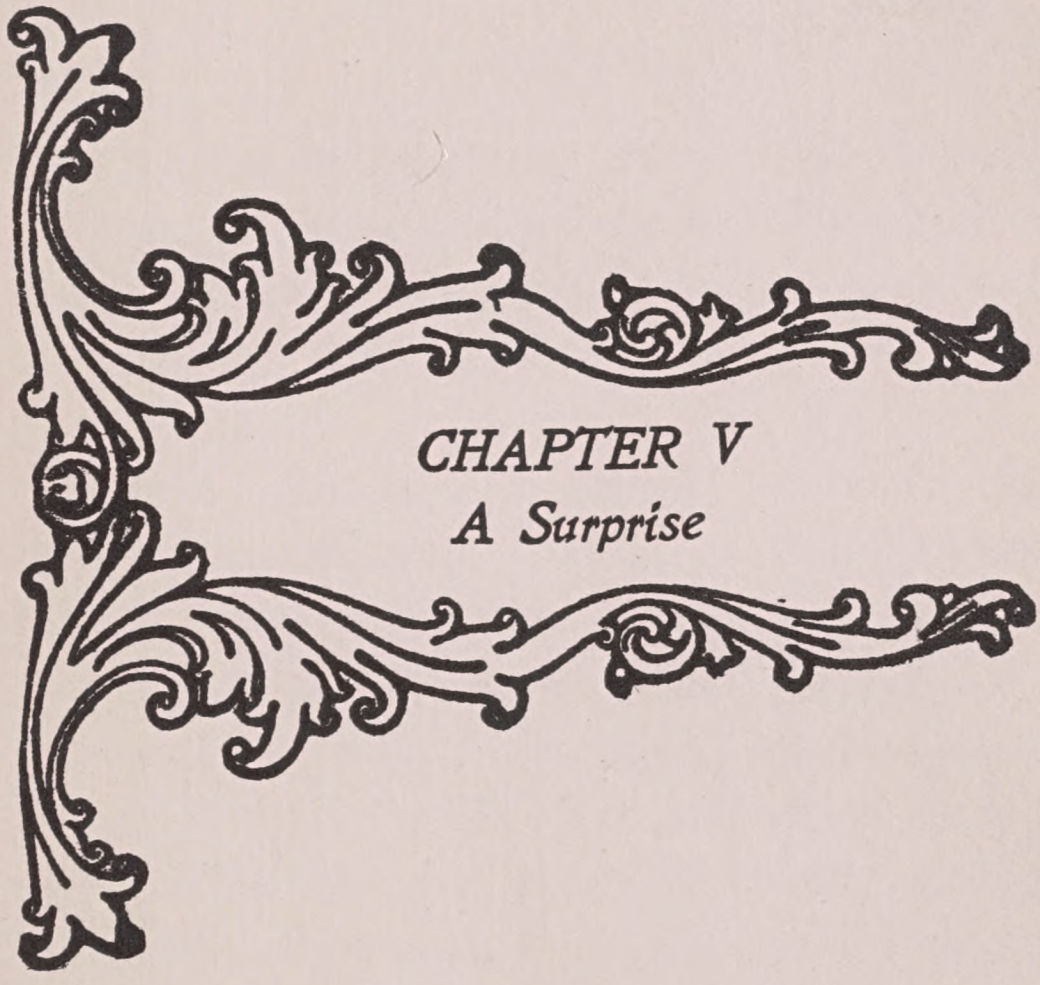
"Mary, don't stay at the window," said Mr. Pinner. "I cannot help it if every head of cattle on the place is killed. I am too old to see to things and that's a fact."

The storm lasted for several hours and no one retired until it was really over. Mary was very tired and sleepy when finally she lay down in the little painted bed.

After awhile, however, she grew wide awake.

She had never before slept in a room by herself and she experienced an odd feeling of loneliness and desolation. Suddenly she heard a strange noise. It was not a noise that had anything to do with the storm, for the storm was over; indeed, the moonlight was streaming in through the two windows, soft and beautiful, just as it had flooded the room at Willowbrook such a little time before. The little girl peeped out toward the door leading into the room occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Pinner, and then she realized what the noise was. It was a sort of commingling of two sounds and one of them she knew; she had become familiar with it in the afternoon when she rested in the spare-room up-stairs. The other was similar and yet different. Little Mary, listening, could not tell which snored the louder, Mr. or Mrs. Pinner.

The startled sensation left her, but the desire for sleep had also gone. She lay speculating as to what her life would be here at Hayfields as Mrs. Pinner's little girl.



CHAPTER V

A Surprise

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A Surprise

THE piece of furniture that arrived at Hayfields on Saturday was a beautiful little cherry desk. It was unboxed on the kitchen porch and Mary Daingerfield forgot everything else when she saw it.

"There! the child *is* pleased!" cried the old lady, enthusiastically. "Look at her dimples, father! Now, I can say right out what I didn't dare to say the other day. The desk can't set between the windows because the light wouldn't fall on it good. You just scared me awful, father, when you kept on talking about it setting between the windows, I was so afraid I would say something about the light not falling on it good. Dave was always such a hand about the light, you remember?"

Mr. Pinner gave a grunt. He was far more interested in the cherry desk than in reminiscences of Dave. It was a big undertaking, that of taking

the little desk into Mary's room and establishing it in a proper position. First, it had to be carried very carefully and for this purpose the colored boy was ordered to take hold of one end while Mr. Pinner essayed the other; but the old lady interrupted the proceeding.

"You just step away, father," she said, "you're flurried already. Let Liza help Job."

Liza was summoned. She stood petrified in admiration, then found her voice and cried out, "Laws! but ain't it putty!"

After that Mr. Pinner gave orders to Liza and Job all the way through the sitting-room and out in the back of the front hall, and the orders grew imperative as Liza and Job and the cherry desk for an instant seemed to be wedged in the doorway of Mary's room. Ten minutes later the wash-stand belonging to the painted suit occupied the space between the windows and the desk showed to advantage in the light that flooded it where the wash-stand had been.

"Now," said Mrs. Pinner's satisfied voice, "she can put her diary in the big drawer. I will fill up her little ink-bottles, and whenever she wants, she can come here and do her writing."

That night Mary made this entry in her diary:

"Mr. and Mrs. Pinner have given me a beautiful cherry desk. It has pigeon-holes in it and a lovely bronze ink-stand. There is a pen with a pearl handle and it looks lovely beside my ebony handled pen that papa gave me. I never saw so much writing paper in my life, and there is a stamp box with stamps in it. Liza and Job carried the desk from the back porch. They had an awful time getting it through the door, and Mr. and Mrs. Pinner almost quarreled as to where it should be set.

"I ought to be a very happy girl, but I am still sorry that I was given away. People's children ought to live together till they are grown.

"Mr. Pinner says that he was not cheated in the desk, but I am afraid my 'thank you' did not quite satisfy either him or Mrs. Pinner. I believe they expected me to kiss them, or, at least, to kiss Mrs. Pinner. Kit would have done it."

The next time it rained at Hayfields there was no thunder and lightning, but it was a cold, miserable rain. The old house became so damp that

Mrs. Pinner ordered Job to light a fire on the sitting-room hearth. Notwithstanding the inclement weather, Mr. Pinner was out somewhere on business. At eight o'clock he had not returned.

Perhaps if Mrs. Pinner had not insisted upon treating Mary as if she were a little bit of a girl they might have learned to know each other sooner. It seemed to Mary that her legs were very long whenever she sat on Mrs. Pinner's lap. Mrs. Pinner took her on her lap that evening. The old lady was sitting in a tall, straight chair in front of the fire; it was one of her boasts that she seldom occupied a rocking-chair, never, at home. Aunty over at Willowbrook had been in the habit of holding her little Miss Mary on her lap as she rocked in her uncomfortable green chair or sat stock-still on the floor. Little Miss Mary was glad even of the remembrance of the warmth and welcome of aunty's arms and she decided that it was only when you were strange that your legs felt long.

"You and I are going to have a nice little talk right here before the fire while poor old father's out in the weather," said the old lady. "First

thing I want you to guess something, I want you to guess her name."

"I think her name was Mary," answered the little girl, softly.

"Bless you, that's right!" said Mrs. Pinner, and she gave little Mary Daingerfield a big kiss on the forehead.

"Father and I couldn't utter that name for many and many a day," Mrs. Pinner continued, "and it 'most broke our hearts when the boy would ask after 'Mary.' Maybe she wasn't quite as pretty as you, and maybe the artist painted her up prettier than she really was but she had brown eyes and brown hair. Why, when I heard that little fat boy calling you 'Mary,' in a whisper, I couldn't take a bit of stock in the other little girl who was showing off close up to me, all I wanted was to see your eyes for I was looking at your little brown head. Father and I thought our little girl was the prettiest thing that ever lived. We thought she was pretty when she was dressed in her white frock and we thought she was pretty when she insisted on going barefooted like Dave. Dave was so much younger that he and Mary hardly ever played

together; indeed some said that Mary was jealous of Dave from the start; we'd made so much of her. Anyway, she didn't want Dave to get ahead of her in anything, even to going barefooted. But play! She played all day; she was used to playing before Dave arrived. When she found nothing else to do, she'd slide down the banisters."

"Kit slides down the banisters," said Mary.

"I am sure she does!" cried Mrs. Pinner, appreciatively. "Didn't you slide down the banisters when you were home?"

"Once," acknowledged the demure little girl, "but I didn't slide down straddle, and papa said it was dangerous that way and I mustn't do it again. I suppose it was dangerous; but I can ride horseback."

"You can!" cried Mrs. Pinner. "Where in the world did you ever learn to ride horseback?"

"Papa had a horse out from Washington last summer," answered Mary, proudly, "and Kit and Buz and I all rode horseback. Kit rode straddle."

"I'll warrant she did!" cried Mrs. Pinner.

After that the old lady talked for a long time

about the little brown-eyed Mary Pinner, and the demure little girl fell to admiring the narrator. She concluded that the old lady had a wonderful mind to remember all those things that she was telling about, the very way that Mary Pinner looked when she said this, the very way that she tossed her head when she said that, the dresses that she wore, the slippers and the hoops, and it was all so long ago, for Mrs. Pinner said at the beginning, "My little girl, Mary, was born, lived, and died before your papa and mamma came into the world."

"You must be very sorry that she isn't here now, Mrs. Pinner," said Mary, at the termination of the story. My! the ecstasy of Mary Pinner over the little white chamber suit painted with roses! My! how she would have capered and clapped her hands at the sight of the little cherry desk!

"Mary," said the old lady, "I don't want you to call me Mrs. Pinner."

At this Mary's heart cried out, "I won't call you mamma."

"And I don't want you to call father Mr. Pinner."

"I won't call him papa," cried Mary's heart, but the little girl was sitting meekly on Mrs. Pinner's lap and her legs felt very, very long.

"In the law," said Mrs. Pinner, "you are ours."

"In the law?" whispered Mary.

"Yes," said the old lady, "but I reckon you don't know anything about the law in such matters. Well, I've told you all about our other little girl, now I'll talk some about this one here in my lap. When father and I decided that we just couldn't stand the loneliness of the place any longer, that we could and would get a little girl, we agreed that we would do the right thing by her, we would adopt her according to the law and give her a daughter's portion. 'There are to be no half measures,' father said, and he's not going to go back on his word. But finding the right kind of a little girl was the trouble. We wanted one that we could be proud of as well as love.

"When we heard of the death of your father and mother and understood how things were, we wrote a letter to Miss Daingerfield asking if we might adopt one of the children. I never saw a man in as big a hurry as father was to get over

to Willowbrook after we received your cousin's answer to that letter. When we went to your house and heard your name and saw what size you were and knew that you were really and truly going to belong to us—well, we were two happy old people, that's all, and Mr. Pinner was lively through the whole hot drive back to Hayfields. But we said that we wouldn't change your name to Pinner, you should still be Mary Daingerfield."

"Oh, yes!" cried Mary, in a startled voice.

"I'm glad that you're a Daingerfield," continued Mrs. Pinner, complacently. "I'm a great person to appreciate good, blue blood. No, you shan't be named Pinner, Dave will have to keep that all to himself. I'm glad that you're a little Daughter of the Revolution, Mary."

"I'm not your child, in the law, am I?" asked Mary, anxiously.

Mrs. Pinner laughed. "I reckon you're just Mrs. Pinner's little girl," she said.

"I knew I was a Daughter of the Revolution," said Mary, "but when I am a lady I will have to be enrolled, won't I?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Pinner, cheerfully, "and pay

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your fees. You'll have no trouble paying your fees, Mary, or traveling off to the meetings. You're to have a daughter's part of the Pinner estate."

Kit would have cried out, "Am I?" and clapped her hands, and then demanded the meaning of a daughter's part and of the Pinner estate, and been disappointed if she wasn't to inherit a million dollars. Kit wanted to be worth a million dollars before she died. Kit's sister, Mary, did not utter a word of thanks.

"I am not going to ask you to call Mr. Pinner, papa, and me, mamma," Mrs. Pinner went on. "It would be hard to do, I know, and besides we're too old to be wanting it. I am going to ask you to try to call Mr. Pinner, grandpa, and to call me, grandma. Will you, honey?"

"I will try," said Mary.

"That's right," said the old lady, "that's right. You try and you'll get on first-rate. I wonder if you'd like to hear another story yet to-night or if you'd rather go to bed. I know something about three little children named Kit and Buz and the baby. Would you like to hear it?"

The little girl on Mrs. Pinner's lap forgot that

her legs were long. She lifted her expressive face to Mrs. Pinner's, she showed her dimples and her eyes grew dark and big.

"Tell me about them," she cried. "Have they been given away too? Where's Kit? Where's Buz? Where's the baby?"

"I knew that somebody had a little life in her somewheres," said Mrs. Pinner. "I knew somebody knew how to stir around on a person's lap. Kit and Buz and the baby are all right. I can tell you where they are but I don't know whether you'll know all the places. When you children rode that old horse that your father brought out from town last summer, how far did you go?"

Why did Mrs. Pinner say that "old" horse?

"It went fast," said Mary.

"Did you ever ride down the crossroad to a white gate with red posts and trimmings? It's on this side the woods."

"Was there a bird-box on a pole in a field?" asked the little girl.

"That's the place. You can see the house plainly from the gate."

"Is the house painted yellow?" asked Mary, faintly.

"With blue trimmings, yes," said Mrs. Pinner. "I wonder how they came to have the gate white and red! Well, Kit's in there."

The big dark eyes were hot by this time.

"Where is Buz?"

"You ain't mad because Kit's in the yellow house?" inquired the old lady.

"Mr. Johnny Jones and his wife live there," said Mary, evasively.

"Yes, and they've been wanting a child this long time. Where do you think Buz is? Buz is on the other side of the woods. I know the old horse never got you any further than the bird-house. Buz lives in a pretty little white cottage with old Mr. Harrington and his sister. They're nice people."

Little Mary's heart was full. Aunty had said that she hoped Buz would be given away far off from Kit and that he would not be given to any old particular people. And now to think that Kit and Buz were to live in houses separated only by a woods, a beautiful woods in which to play, with chestnut-trees grown up from the roots, forming regular playhouses. And worse than all Buz had been given away to two old

particular people. No, the horse from Washington had never carried his burden beyond the bird-house on the pole, but often and often the three children on the old horse had met Mr. Harrington and his sister, Miss Jane, driving slowly along in their rockaway.

"Where's the baby?" asked Mary.

"They all went off like hot cakes after we got you," said Mrs. Pinner. "They've taken the baby at the post-office."

"Those people who live behind the post-office?" asked Mary, and in her voice was doubt mingled with indignation.

"They'll be good to it," said Mrs. Pinner. "When folks want a baby as bad as the Wilsons they're not going to let it lack attention."

When Mary inquired about her Cousin Cynthia, Mrs. Pinner said:

"She's gone back to Boston and I'm glad of it. After teaching all the winter-time she certainly needs a rest in the warm weather. I don't know when I ever met any one that pleased me better than your Cousin Cynthia. She's got such ladylike manners."

It was nine by the sitting-room clock when

Mr. Pinner came home. He brought with him a queer-looking letter addressed to Miss Mary Daingerfield, care of Mrs. Pinner. The old gentleman was very much pleased that Mary should receive a letter.

"She can answer it at her desk, can't she, mother?" he said.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Pinner, "but she must wait till to-morrow. Would you like to read your letter here or carry it to your own room, Mary?"

"I should like to read it in my own room," answered Mary.

"I would see who it is from while I was out here," said Mr. Pinner, regarding the letter with a great deal of curiosity.

Kit would have torn the letter open as soon as it was handed to her, but then it would have been Kit's first letter. After Kit had torn the letter open she would have asked Mrs. Pinner to read it for her. Instinctively Mary knew that the proceedings of Kit under the circumstances would have delighted both Mr. and Mrs. Pinner.

"Tell father who it's from," pleaded the old lady.

The little girl obediently opened the letter and looked at the signature.

"It's from aunty," she said, and turned away to go to her room. At the sitting-room door she looked back and shyly called, "Good-night!"

In her little room Mary opened the letter again, spread it before her on the cherry desk and read:

"DEAR LITTLE MISS MARY:

"I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well and that Kit and Buz and the baby have all been give away. Your cozin, Miss Cynthy Daingerfield, was in a big hury to git back to Bostun, and she give Kit and Buz and the baby away to the fust pussons that asked fer them. She give Kit to the wust pusson in the world to rase a chile, up to the yaller house to that Mrs. Jonny Jones what wears flowers and fethers in her hat at the same time. Kit won't never lern no maners in the yaller house and she and Buz will be mighty close togedder. She give Buz to old Mr. Harrington to carry up to Miss Jane. She give the baby to the people back of the post-office. Mark my words there is going to be trubble tween the yaller house and Miss Jane Harrington. If I hed hed any say in the matter I certinly would have kept pore Buz from being give way to two sech old perticlar peple.

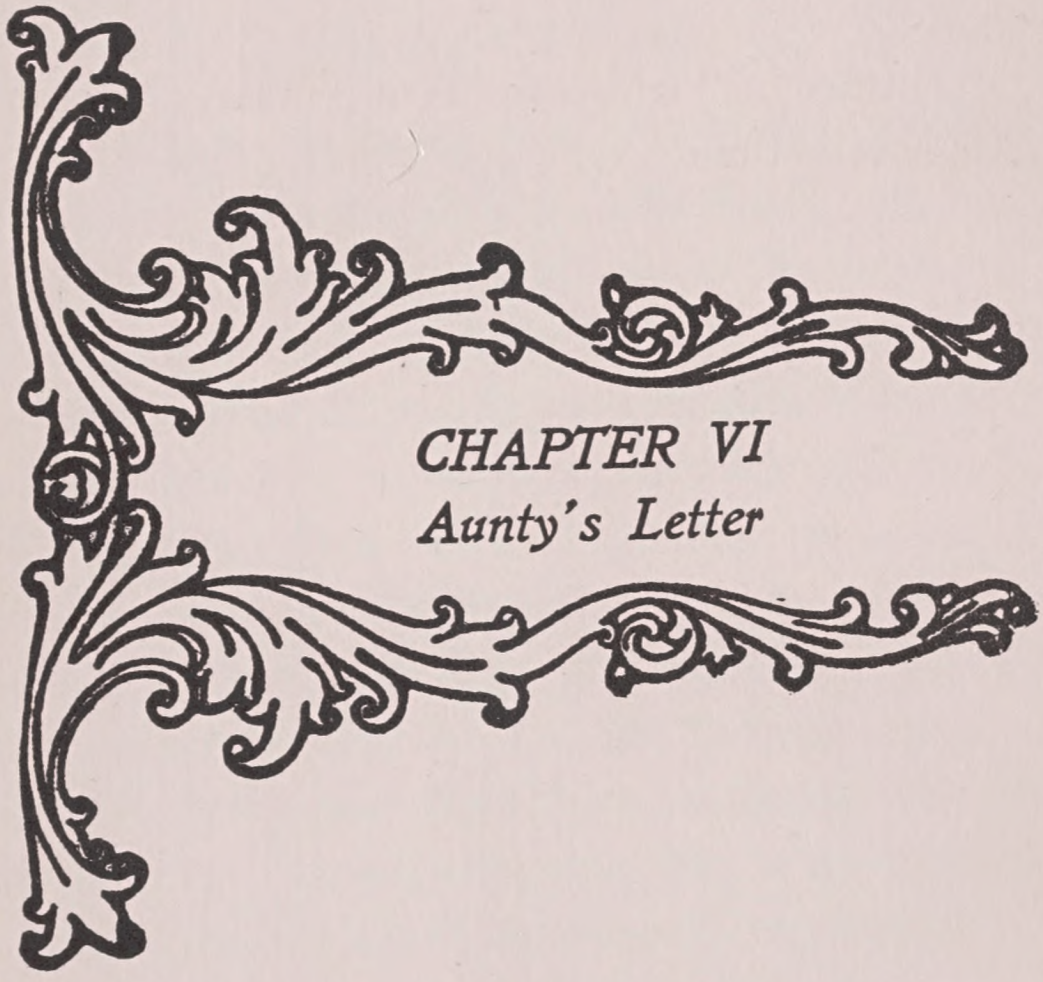
"Respect in haste,

"AUNTY."

Mary's elbows sought the desk, she hid her face in her hands. The words "poor Buz" were wringing the affectionate little heart.

"Is she crying?" whispered Mr. Pinner at the door.

"Let her be," whispered Mrs. Pinner. "Some things take time."



CHAPTER VI

Aunty's Letter

CHAPTER VI

Aunty's Letter

On Sunday morning Mrs. Pinner's little girl went into her room directly after breakfast, for, of course, she thought that the carriage and the two horses would be ready to take them all to church. True, Mrs. Pinner had said that Mr. Pinner was not a religious man, but although Mary Daingerfield was only ten years old she was quite aware that a great many men who are not religious go to church on Sunday. She was a little surprised that the old lady had not told her what dress to wear, but she was rather pleased to have it so. Already she was beginning to take pleasure in the small measure of responsibility, unconsciously perhaps, imposed upon her.

She went into her room and closed the door carefully behind her. More than once she had heard Mr. and Mrs. Pinner laughing when she closed the door, but she told herself that she must not mind when they laughed; they did not mean

anything by it. She had not yet succeeded in calling these two kind old people "grandpa" and "grandma" though she said the words over to herself at night and tried her best to speak them out courageously in the daytime, but she no longer called them Mr. and Mrs. Pinner except in her thoughts.

Mrs. Pinner had noticed the omission and nodded her head at the old gentleman.

"The other will come after a while," she said. "It's something not to be Mr. and Mrs. Pinner."

"It certainly is something not to be 'Mr. Pinner,'" said Mr. Pinner; "it certainly is."

"And I'm glad and thankful not to be 'Mrs. Pinner,' I reckon I am," said the old lady, shaking all over in her mirth.

Mary opened the closet door and meditated as to what dress she should wear. There was a new dress hanging among the others, "a gift from grandma." It was white and trimmed with very pretty lace. She would put on this dress and surprise and please Mrs. Pinner, for it did seem that whenever she could, she certainly ought to try to give the old lady pleasure.

Mrs. Pinner had helped her to unpack the lit-

tle trunk that first evening of the day of her arrival. Was it only a few days ago? Incredible! Mary had to stand on a chair to reach the closet hooks. She took out the new dress carefully, dismounted, and laid it on the bed, then she got upon the chair again to take down a skirt.

She laid hold of a flannel skirt by mistake and said to herself that she was glad people did not wear flannel skirts in warm weather like they used to do when Mary Pinner was a little girl, but the flannel skirt was assertive, it fell off the hook and was on top of the white skirt when Mary stepped off the chair.

She placed the desired article on the bed beside the white dress and stood there in the middle of the pretty room, looking down at that little flannel skirt. It was not hers, it belonged to Kit and Kit was living in the yellow house with the Joneses. A great hunger came into her heart to see Kit and Buz and the baby; she wanted to see them more even than she wanted to go to church. She knew from what she had heard Mr. and Mrs. Pinner say that they considered it wise for her to remain away from her little sister and Buz and the baby until all of them were used to

their new homes. It would be no use to ask either Mr. or Mrs. Pinner to take her visiting, but Kit ought to have her flannel skirt.

"Kit ought to have her flannel skirt," she said to herself, quite gravely. "Suppose it should turn cold like it did the other day? Kit has only two flannel skirts and she'd have to change."

The yellow house was about four miles away and the church three in a different direction. It was such a warm day that she felt sure that Kit would not be at church.

"If it were nice and cool Kit would make the Joneses take her to church," she said.

But even if the morning had been cool, Mary Daingerfield had too much respect for the Lord's Day to think of taking Kit's flannel skirt to church. The people would be wondering what she had in her bundle. If she were to see Kit, however, she would tell her that she had her skirt and Kit would ask the Joneses to bring her over to get it. She would tell Kit to stop for Buz and to go down to the post-office and get the baby, and Kit would make the Joneses do it.

Disconsolately she regarded the little skirt. No, Kit would not be at church; very probably

she would be home in the Joneses' yard, running barefooted. The Joneses were not the right kind of people to bring up a child.

All that Mary could do was to make up her mind to say a prayer in the church, asking God please to manage in some way to let her see her sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Pinner were sitting on the side porch while Mary was making her preparations for church, and they both looked up in astonishment when she appeared before them, wearing her new dress. She had on her best hat and gloves, and was all ready to start, with the exception of the fastening of her waist. She gave a queer little smile in compliment to the new dress and backed up to the old lady with a petition that she button it.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Pinner, and she fastened the dress.

"Where did you think of going this morning, honey?" she asked, after duly admiring the dress. "Mr. Pinner, I believe you have promised to carry her somewhere and have forgotten it."

The old gentleman looked perplexed and sorry.

"Did I promise to carry you anywhere, Mary?" he asked.

"No," said Mary, "but how do we go to church?"

At this Mr. and Mrs. Pinner laughed so heartily that the cook put her head around the corner of the house to see what was the matter and kept it there, grinning broadly.

"Somebody doesn't half like us to laugh, father," said Mrs. Pinner, wiping her perspiring brow, "and certainly 'tis a shame."

Mr. Pinner ceased laughing, but there was a twinkle in his eye when he said: "We walk to church, Mary."

"Oh!" said Mary.

Then it came to her that they must walk to church through the two-mile meadow, along by the water, under the trees. But Mr. and Mrs. Pinner were not dressed for church, and why had they laughed?

"Mary," said the old lady, "don't you mind father's fun. Nobody at Hayfields ever walks to church. Father, confess, tell the child that you don't belong to her church."

"Oh!" and Mary's cheeks grew red.

"Suppose I confess that I'm a Dunkard, Mary," said Mr. Pinner. "What will you say to that?"

"Father, quit making fun of the Dunkard religion," said Mrs. Pinner. "Somebody is as sharp as you please. He's an old man, Mary, isn't he, not to belong to any church?"

The be-flowered hat nodded.

"What do you think of mother there belonging to the Big Church?" inquired Mr. Pinner, crossing his legs and preparing to enjoy himself.

"I don't know where the Big Church is," said Mary.

"It's everywhere," explained Mr. Pinner. "It's here on the porch; it's down yonder in the meadow. You don't have to dress to go to it, and you don't have to stir a step to reach it. The horses can rest in the pasture and be glad on Sunday if the folks at the house belong to the Big Church."

"I can walk to the little church," said Mary, "if you will show me the way."

"You dear little soul!" cried Mrs. Pinner. "Father, don't tease her any more this day. She'd start out to walk to her church!"

And the glory of the Big Church was all about

the little drooping head in the flower-bedecked hat.

Mr. Pinner looked at his watch.

"It's too late," he said, in a tone of relief, "but next Sunday if she fixes herself like that I'll have a horse harnessed to the buggy and drive her to church. Don't you forget to remind me, mother."

"'Twould be a shame to forget," said Mrs. Pinner.

The little girl in the new dress understood matters perfectly by this time. Her eyes grateful and pitiful looked from one of the kind people to the other. Mr. Pinner was indeed very old not to belong to any church, and Mrs. Pinner was old too.

"I will be glad if you will take me next Sunday," she said, "for I think a little church does a person more good."

"You've just got to carry her to church after that, father," said Mrs. Pinner.

Then Mary returned to her room and divested herself of her white dress. She found a piece of brown paper in the bottom of the closet and wrapped up Kit's flannel skirt, and after she had

done this she knelt at the foot of her bed and said the little prayer that she had intended to say in the church.

The following Sunday it was raining and the old lady said that they would all have to be satisfied with the Big Church. Thursday brought a second letter to Mary.

The little girl had answered aunty's letter promptly and she was pleased to hear from her again, for as soon as Mr. Pinner said, "Here's a letter for somebody," she was sure it was a letter from aunty.

The old gentleman had recognized the handwriting. "It's from the black woman," he said, nodding at Mrs. Pinner.

"If the black woman keeps that little thing homesick she must quit writing," Mary heard Mrs. Pinner say as she fled to her room to read the letter.

Before reading the whole of that letter Mary understood that aunty was homesick too.

"Dear little Miss Mary," the letter ran, "I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well and that I is now 'gaged in takin' in washin' fer a livin'. I 'most broke my back

yisday over the wash-tub. I will never fine a plase out at servus to suit me. I lived with your mamma all her life and nussed her when she were a baby, and I nussed you alls, but I will never fine anudder servus plase to suit me. Day before yisday I seen Kit and Buz in the big road near the yaller house. Buz was lookin' nice and tidy. I speck it's hard for him to keep hisself like that. Kit had cut her hand and sech a rag as was tied round it make me sick to think of. Them Jonses ain't the right kind of people to bring up a chile like Kit. I write this letter speshually to tell you about your sister's hand tied up in sech a rag and to 'mind you of them lessons we used to have last winter in Willowbrook. You was a very good teacher. I seen the baby one day. It is hotter back of the post-office than enywhere I know of. I know you will wurry a heap 'bout Kit's hand and to think how hard it must be for pore Buz to keep hisself so spick and span. He oughta have on his ovahauls and tumble in the grass. Your papa say a boy like Buz better 'most live in his ovahauls. Perhaps you will wurry some to 'bout your pore old black aunty turned out in the cold world to breck her back over the wash-tub for a livin', but I can't find a servus plase to suit. You has a sensible haid and a kind hart like your mamma, your papa say so and he wasn't one to brag and bluster.

"Respect in haste,
"AUNTY."

Mary felt certain that aunty had written the

letter very slowly, possibly late in the night, for aunty never did care what time she got to bed. While she had honorably discharged her duty as teacher, Mary had not been able to prevail upon the old woman to begin a letter in any other manner than "I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well," or to terminate it with other words than "Respect in haste."

"I must see Kit and Buz," said the little girl, "and I must see the baby."

Yet if the letter made her homesick the black woman was to quit writing, that was what Mrs. Pinner said. She did not dare to think further, she rushed right out into the sitting-room.

"Kit's cut her hand," she cried.

"What's that?" asked Mr. Pinner.

Mrs. Pinner looked concerned.

"The other little girl has cut her hand, father," she explained. "Honey, I hope she didn't cut it deep."

"I don't know," said Mary. "It's got an old dirty rag on it. I want to see my sister."

The tears came then.

"Honey, come here," said Mrs. Pinner.

"She won't let Buz wear his overalls," sobbed

the little girl while the old lady's arms closed tenderly about her, "and papa said that Buz was the kind of boy to wear overalls all the time."

Mr. Pinner drew up his chair.

"What about the little boy?" he asked.

"Miss Jane won't let him wear his overalls," answered Mrs. Pinner.

"That's a shame," said the old gentleman. "Buz ought to wear his overalls if he wants to."

"I want to see my brother," wailed Mary.

"Pet her nice, mother, she feels bad," said Mr. Pinner.

"Did the black woman write you all that, Mary?" asked Mrs. Pinner. "She must be pretty smart to write it so you could read."

"I taught aunty to write a letter," said Mary.

"Father, listen!" cried Mrs. Pinner, in admiration, "this little girl taught the black woman to write a letter. Think of that!"

"Well, well, well!" said Mr. Pinner.

"I want to see aunty!" wailed Mary.

"Father," said Mrs. Pinner, "you tell her the

story about the two little calves. She's quiet now, and she's going to lie here and listen."

"Once there were two little calves out in the barnyard," said Mr. Pinner. "One of them was white and one of them was red. They had both been taken away from the old cows who lived down yonder in the meadow. They bawled all the day that they were taken away from the old cows and they bawled all the night, and the cows down in the meadow bawled too. The next morning the little white calf got out of the barnyard, made its way to the meadow and found its mother. It was collared that evening and brought back. Well, it stood there in the barnyard bawling while the little red calf switched its tail and drank its milk like an old cow. Ever so many times after that did the little white calf contrive to get out of the barnyard and go to its mother, and by so doing kept itself in a continual state of bawling and the old mother-cow mooing for weeks. But the little red calf stayed right close to the spot where it was fed, and both it and its mother were tranquil and happy.

"Now if you stay right still here with mother and me," said Mr. Pinner, at the conclusion of

the story, "Kit and Buz and the baby will be contented and happy, and in a very little while you will be contented and happy, too, just like the little red calf; but if you break out of Hayfields and run over to the yellow house and to the cottage and down to the post-office, Kit and Buz and the baby will all get to bawling, and you will get to bawling too, like the little white calf. You don't want to make things hard for Kit and Buz and the baby, do you?"

"Of course she doesn't," said Mrs. Pinner.

But Mr. and Mrs. Pinner did not know anything at all about the dispositions of Kit and Buz and the baby.

"They wouldn't cry," said the little girl.

Mr. Pinner pushed back his chair and walked up and down the sitting-room.

"I reckon she's right," he said, "she'd be the one to do the whole of the crying. Mother, isn't there any medicine for it?"

"I reckon the little white calf got over its trouble in time," said the old lady.

Mr. Pinner paused in his walk. "No, it didn't," he said, solemnly, "I gave up and let it run with the cow."

On Sunday Mr. Pinner took Mary to church in the buggy. It was a warm day and very few children were present at the service. Old Mr. Harrington and his sister, Miss Jane, sat decorously in one of the front pews but it is not at all improbable that now and then Miss Jane's thoughts strayed to the spick-and-span little boy she had left at home.

Mr. Pinner and Mary were very good friends that evening when the old gentleman invited the little girl to go with him to see if everything was all right in the region of the barn.

The beautiful moon was smiling on the Big Church when Mr. Pinner stopped at the stile.

"Mary," he said, "you haven't called me 'grandpa' yet. Don't you think you could do it away off here from the house and with nobody listening?"

She gave a bashful little laugh.

"Honey," said Mr. Pinner, impressively, "if you put your arms around my neck and call me 'grandpa,' just once, mind! you can ask me for anything, and you'll get it."

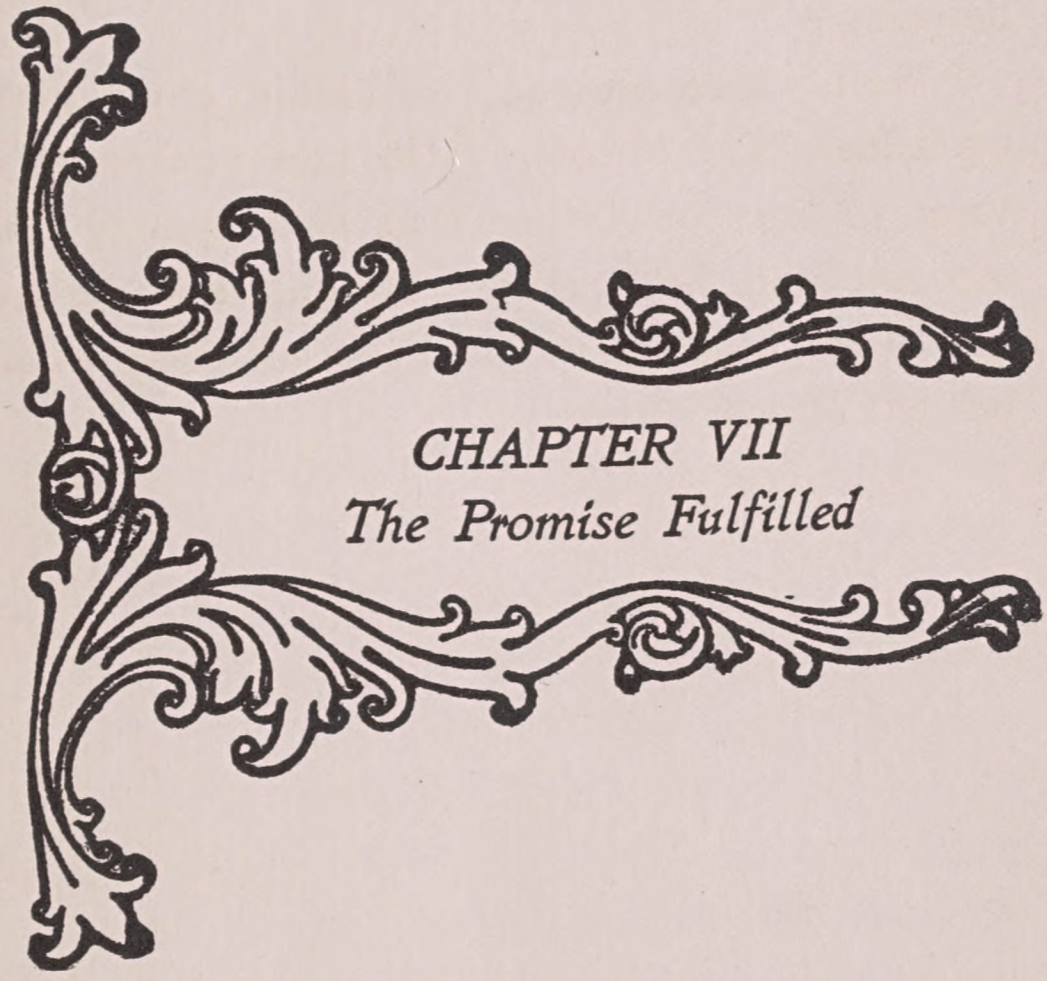
"Anything?" repeated Mary.

"You'll get it," promised Mr. Pinner.

She put her arms around his neck and she gave him a hug—such a one as she knew how to give.

"Grandpa," she said, with a little gasp in her voice, "will you let me have a horse to-morrow morning?"

"Well, where are you two hiding, anyway?" exclaimed Mrs. Pinner. "Oh, here you are! I want to tell you, father, that next Sunday you can hitch up the carriage. If you can stand the heat, I reckon I can too, and I'm not going to be left out of everything."



CHAPTER VII

The Promise Fulfilled

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MARY DAINGERFIELD thought about Mr. Pinner's promise that night as she lay in bed. He had said that he would give her anything that she asked for if she put her arms around his neck and called him grandpa, and she had done it. She had asked him to let her have a horse. Mr. Pinner was a good man and a man of his word. The sudden appearance of Mrs. Pinner had prevented him from acquiescing in the plan of the horse though it was a wonder he did not come right out with the whole matter. Mary was thankful for the old gentleman's reticence. It had not been easy to hug Mr. Pinner and call him grandpa.

She would take Kit's flannel skirt in the morning and ride over to the yellow house. She fell asleep smiling.

The next morning after breakfast the little girl

fully expected Mr. Pinner to tell her that the horse would be saddled and bridled and brought to the hitching-post, but he did not mention the horse. He took his hat, however, and went out directly. She was glad to see him going toward the barn, and glowed with inward satisfaction when he called Job to come along, he had something for him to do. Frequently during the hours of that long morning Mary looked out at the hitching-post, each time to be disappointed.

Mrs. Pinner had said to Mr. Pinner that Sunday that she had dressed for church, "There, father, you've promised to carry the child somewhere and have forgotten," and Mr. Pinner had looked sorry and asked, "Did I promise to carry you anywhere, Mary?" thereby proving that he was in the habit of forgetting things. But even if he had forgotten early in the morning he would have remembered when he saw the horses. Kit would have reminded him of his promise, calling him an "old Indian-giver" if she did not get the horse, but Mary would never have the courage to say a word. Mr. Pinner was a man who might keep some of his promises but most certainly he did not keep them all; she

would never, never again hug him and call him grandpa.

Mrs. Pinner's little girl was more quiet than usual all the rest of the day, and she wrote two whole pages in her diary, carefully as usual and as usual without a blot.

But Mr. Pinner had not forgotten that hug and the whispered "grandpa" out there on the stile. They were freighted with huge possibilities. He would do everything in his power for this pretty little girl with the gentle blood in her veins, and, in return, the little girl would give him and his dear old wife the affection of a daughter. That was the return he craved, the return he looked for, and he was not going to be disappointed. It would come in time. So the little girl wanted to ride horseback? No doubt, she had been sitting there quietly at the window, watching the colored boy swing himself upon a horse, and had envied him, while neither he nor Mrs. Pinner had been able to divine her thoughts.

"And did she think," he said to himself with a laugh, "that I would let her risk her precious little bones on the back of one of the farm horses?"

He consulted Mrs. Pinner on the important subject. Several times Mary caused the two old people to lower their voices at her approach and on one occasion the old lady grew quite excited over a bundle that Job brought from the express office.

"It's just something of mine, father," she said, giving the old gentleman a look which plainly warned him to ask no questions.

"That's all right," said Mr. Pinner. "Put it away somewhere and open it after a while."

Mrs. Pinner put the bundle away in her bureau drawer and the little girl was not about when she opened it.

Then one day Mr. Pinner, on his return from a ride, stopped outside in the lane and sent the boy in to tell Mrs. Pinner to bring Mary out, he wanted them.

There in the lane, beside Mr. Pinner's beautiful chestnut mare was a little gray pony wearing a little girl's saddle.

Mr. Pinner's face was a happy thing to see.

Job led the pony to the block and in less than a minute Mary was seated securely in the saddle.

"We'll try it between here and the barn and see how it goes," said the old gentleman.

To and fro between the picturesque old house and the prosperous old barn Mr. Pinner and Mary rode, first in a walk, then in a trot, and then in a gentle lope.

"Well!" cried the old lady, flushed with pleasure, "well, if she doesn't ride beautiful! Father, I'm so glad you thought of getting her a pony."

Mr. Pinner laughed and laughed, but he did not explain to Mrs. Pinner that the little gray pony was payment for a hug and a whispered word. He had not understood the request but what a kind and generous man he was!

That gallop on the pony had raised Mary's spirits, and she was laughing too as, without any help, she slid from the saddle to the ground and followed the old lady to the house.

Mr. Pinner came over a little later and sat down in his great porch chair. He seemed fagged out. Dear knows how far he had gone after the pony; and he had ridden to and fro in the lane until the fresh little girl had had enough.

She stood in the doorway, looking at him. She ought to thank him. She knew instinctively

how he would wish her to thank him and she screwed up her courage, but she was very glad that Mrs. Pinner was not in sight.

She tiptoed across the porch lest somebody might hear.

"Thank you for the pony, grandpa," she said, putting her arms about the old gentleman's neck and kissing him.

He said, "God bless you!" and put his hands up to the precious little arms and caressed them in great content. Then it was all over and the little Daingerfield girl was back somewhere in the house.

Mary's second ride was an important affair. For it the little girl was arrayed in a cloth riding-habit and a dark cap, both brought in triumph from Mrs. Pinner's bureau drawer. The chestnut mare and the little gray pony walked up the lane but broke into a canter on the public road, the pony keeping steadily head to head with the mare. The riders did not go in the direction of the yellow house, but they came back in something closely resembling a hard gallop, and somebody's cheeks were red and somebody's eyes were dancing.

After Mary had hung her habit on a hook in the closet she put the bundle containing Kit's flannel skirt away back out of sight. She could not start off on the pony to see her sister unless she asked permission of Mr. and Mrs. Pinner or at least of the old gentleman whom she had twice called grandpa; it would not be honest, and Mary was as honest a little mortal as ever breathed.

So, the weeks went by. Sunday succeeded Sunday and the little girl went to church in the two-horse carriage with the master and mistress of Hayfields. Mr. Harrington and Miss Jane were always in their pew and now and then Mary found herself wishing that Buz's head would pop up and turn around. But Miss Jane would touch him sharply on the shoulder, of course, and bid him look in the right direction, and with this thought in her mind she was glad that poor Buz was not at church. Once she saw Mrs. Jones but she fanned herself so vigorously and appeared so dissatisfied and warm that Mary was not surprised that she did not come again.

Coming in one morning from a delightful ride

on the little pony, Mary found a letter waiting for her on the table. Aunty had not written for a long time; she had almost forgotten that the old woman owed her an answer.

"I hope," said Mrs. Pinner, as Mary went off toward her room, "that this letter isn't going to upset her. If it does, I certainly will be angry with myself for not throwing it into the kitchen fire."

"If the letter upsets her the black woman shall never write again," said Mr. Pinner.

Still wearing her riding-habit, Mary settled herself in the little white rocking-chair, opened the letter and read:

"DEAR LITTLE MISS MARY:

"I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well and to tell you I am verry glad to lern from a frend that you have got a butiful littul pony. I told you you was at the top of the ladder and I certinly am glad of it. I am still takin' in washin' for a livin' and I wunder I got enny back left much less legs to stand on. I was over to see the baby yisday. He don't look roun' and fat like he done when he was my baby. He has cut two more teeth and is frettin' a good deel. It is hotter back of the post-ofuse than enny house I ever was in in all my born days. I seen Kit and Buz to the post-ofuse yisday. Buz

was lookin' nice and tidy. I reckun he has clean fergot the time he done played roun' in his ovahauls. Your papa say Buz was the kind of boy to most live in his ovahauls. I hardly knowed Kit. The frekels on her face made me sick. Them Jonses don't never make Kit wear her bonnet like your mamma use to. I tole Kit and Buz 'bout your pony but they knowed all 'bout it. Kit said she seen you once and waved her hand, but you was ridin' fast and didn't pay no 'tention. Kit's powful jealus and so is Buz. I am glad you got your pony and I hope sum day you will find time to ride 'round where your old aunty can git a good look at you. My frend say you got a ridin' habit what is a sight for sore eyes. I told you you would git all them things. I wish I could be as glad 'bout all my children as I is glad 'bout you.

"Respect in haste,

"AUNTY."

Mary rose from the rocking-chair, put the letter carefully away in a pigeon-hole of the cherry desk, then she went over to one of the large windows and established herself on the sill. From this position she could look right down at that end of the two-mile meadow.

Once upon a time there were two little calves in the meadow, a red one and a white one. These little calves were taken away from the old cows and fastened up in the barnyard and they bawled

all day and they bawled all night; then the little white calf found its way back to the meadow and when a second time it was brought, bawling, to the barnyard there stood the little red calf, contentedly drinking its milk and switching its tail like an old cow. The little red calf forgot very soon.

"I wanted to go back like the little white calf but I couldn't," said Mary. "I won't be like the little red calf," she added. "I am not going to forget Kit and Buz and the baby."

She repeated this intention when she wrote in her diary:

"DEAR MAMMA:

"I promised you that I would take care of Kit and Buz and the baby. Cousin Cynthia said that you did not know how things would be or you would not have asked me to do it, but I believe you would because I am the oldest. I do not think you would like your children to be given away, and I know you would not like one of your children to be riding a beautiful little gray pony while your little girl, Kit, was running without her bonnet and getting freckled so bad that aunty hardly knew her, and your dear little baby was fretting in that hot house behind the post-office, and your poor little boy, Buz, was living with two old particular people. I always told you everything, mamma, and I will tell you this

too, though it almost breaks my heart. I was learning to forget like the little red calf, but I will not do it any more, I will try to think of some way in which I can take care of Kit and Buz and the baby.

"Your little daughter,

"MARY DAINGERFIELD.

"P. S. Tell papa I am very sorry that I was learning to be like the little red calf."

The next time Mr. Pinner proposed a ride, Mary said that she did not wish to go, whereupon Mrs. Pinner spoke her thoughts right out.

"It's the letter from the black woman, father," she said, "and I'm of the opinion that she's taking a mighty fusty part in things. If I were you I certainly would ride over and order her to quit sending her letters to Hayfields; the folks here can get along very well without them. Now, Mary, you mustn't feel hurt and you mustn't get mad with me, you're too little to understand matters, but you know that you were getting on nicely here and you certainly were enjoying your rides with grandpa. We want you to enjoy yourself, that's what we got you for, and we just won't have the black woman interfering.

"Now, this evening, after it gets cool," con-

tinued the old lady, "I want you to put on your habit and let father carry you down to the hollow to see the lady who is going to be your teacher when cool weather sets in. I won't have you getting up any foolish notions that because all the others, Kit and Buz and them, haven't got ponies, you're not to enjoy yours. Some such stuff as that, I reckon, the black woman was writing about."

"No, no, I guess not, mother," said Mr. Pinner.

"I wish she'd get herself a service place out of the neighborhood," said Mrs. Pinner, furiously.

"Mother," said Mr. Pinner, with a short laugh, "the little girl will think you've got a temper."

"Well, I have," acknowledged the old lady. "I'm not often roused, but when I am roused I show the stock I come from. Mary, go right into your room and put on your habit and father will take you down the road before it gets hot and introduce you to the lady who is going to be your teacher."

Filled with great dismay the little girl went obediently into her room and put on her habit.

"Mother, you oughtn't to be so hard," she

heard Mr. Pinner say as her little trembling hands fastened the habit, "she's just the best little girl that ever was."

"Things were going so smoothly," grumbled Mrs. Pinner. "I'd like to sell the black woman."

It was a quiet ride down to the hollow, both Mr. Pinner and the little girl feeling that they were obeying orders and that Mrs. Pinner in a temper was certainly somebody to be obeyed.

The lady teacher was pleasant and talkative and she said that she would be glad, indeed, when the term opened and she could begin work, and she was confident that Mary would learn easily.

"We want her to take the music, too," said Mr. Pinner.

"Of course," assented Miss Burdet. "Can she sing?"

The next thing would be the asking of Mary to sing, Mr. Pinner and Mary knew, and they were both rebellious. They had yielded prompt obedience to the old lady, but the teacher was little and prim and young.

"We haven't had her long," said Mr. Pinner. "We'll find out and let you know later."

The prim young lady said, "Oh, yes, certainly." She was very agreeable.

That night Mrs. Pinner opened the door between the large room and the little room.

"If she doesn't sleep well, we can hear her and I'll go over," she explained to Mr. Pinner, in a gentle voice.

"That's right," said the old gentleman, "that's right."

Mary lay very still but her hands went up to her eyes and got wet.

"Father," confessed the old lady, "I did a disgraceful thing to-day. I read a page of that dear little thing's diary."

"Mother," said Mr. Pinner, "that wasn't honest."

"No, it wasn't honest," said Mrs. Pinner, "and I'll never do it again."

"That's right," said Mr. Pinner, "that's right." He was silent for a minute then he asked curiously and with a little laugh, "What did you read about, mother?"

"You won't laugh when I tell you, father," answered the old lady. "She'd been writing a letter to her mamma."

"Well, well, well!" said Mr. Pinner.

"That little bit of a thing promised her mother she'd look after the other children, and she tells her in the letter that she will try to think of some way to do it. That isn't all."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Pinner.

"There was a postscript."

"There was, mother. It wasn't honest to read it."

"I know it wasn't," said Mrs. Pinner, "and I'll never touch the book again. And written just as neat! Father, I felt that bad."

"What was in the postscript?" asked Mr. Pinner.

Word for word Mrs. Pinner repeated the postscript. Then she started up in bed. "Father, that dear little thing's awake," she said, "I hear her moving."

She left her bed and bounced into the little room.

"You're crying and no wonder!" she exclaimed. "Your Cousin Cynthia had no right in the world to give you away to such an ill-humored old woman. There, honey, hush! I want you to have a good time, indeed I do.

You're not a bit like the little red calf, not a bit. If you feel that you must see Kit and Buz and the baby, well, you've got to see them, that's all. We don't want you ever to have to break away like the little white calf."

The old lady was sitting on the bed. She gathered the little girl in her arms.

"Ask for whatever you want," she said, "and you'll get it."

The suddenness of it all upset little Mary Daingerfield. At first she could think of nothing and then she said with a gasp,

"Kit might need her flannel skirt."

"Is that Kit's petticoat in the bundle stuffed away back in the closet?" inquired Mrs. Pinner. "I thought it was yours and wondered why you wrapped it up."

"It's Kit's," said Mary.

"Ask for anything you want and you shall have it," repeated the contrite old lady.

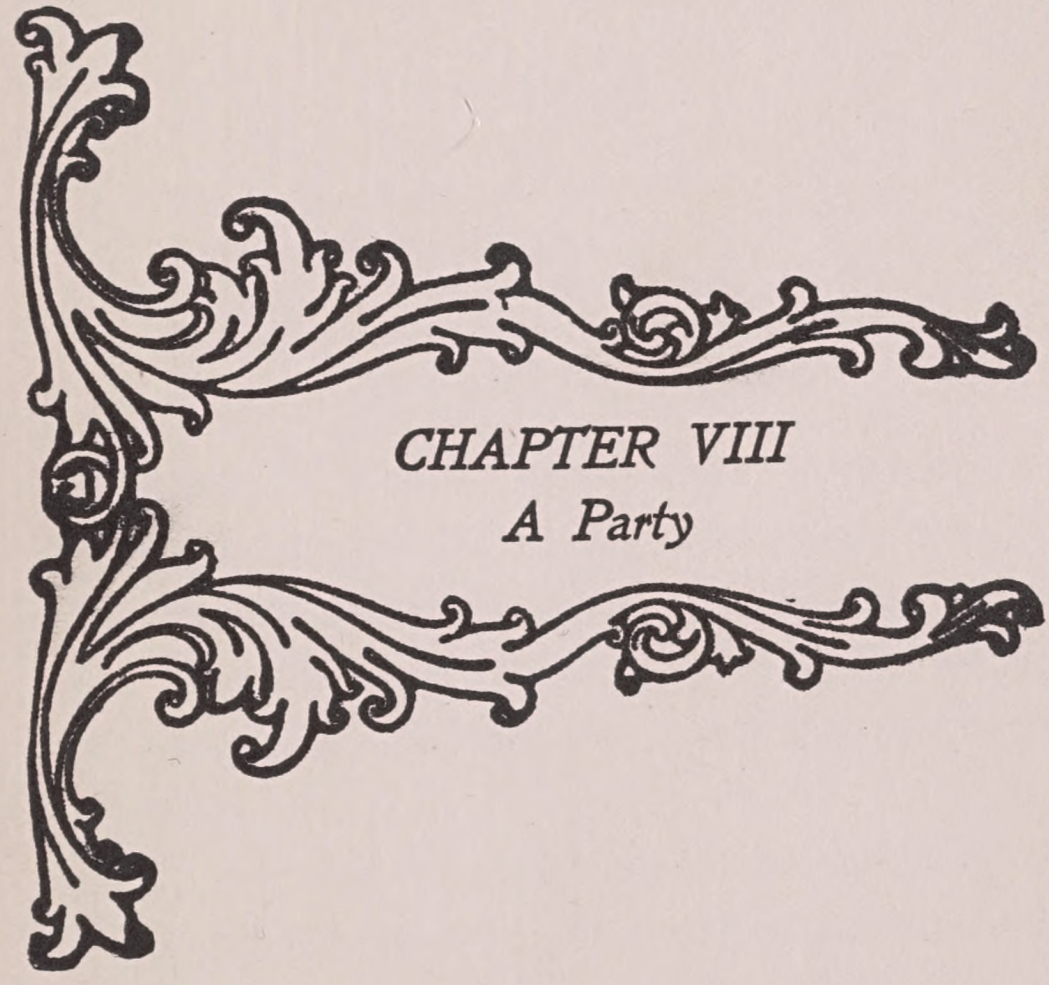
Little Mary, still half-dazed, understood the promise to entail the same conditions named by Mr. Pinner out on the stile. For an instant she hesitated, then Mrs. Pinner felt the deliciousness

of a child's hug and heard her little girl say, tearfully,

"Grandma, may I give a party to my sister and brother?"

The hug was returned with vehemence.

"Bless her precious little heart!" cried grandma, "certainly she shall give a party to her sister and brother, and grandpa himself will fetch Kit and the little boy. Honey, if you go right to sleep, you may give the party to-morrow."



CHAPTER VIII

A Party

CHAPTER VIII

A Party

"There was a little girl,
And she had a little curl,
It hung way down on her forehead.
When she was good she was very, very good,
And when she was bad she was horrid."

SURELY, it would never, under any circumstances, be respectful to say that when the old lady was bad she was horrid. Be that as it may, little Mary Daingerfield could not help thinking that when the old lady was good, she was very, very good.

My! how she bustled about that morning of the day of the party, in and out of the kitchen! in and out of the pantry! And what a stupendous number of little cakes she did make! Liza remonstrated with the old lady about the little cakes, declaring that the table would look like a store counter, and muttering, while the old lady disappeared into the pantry, that "Mis' Pinna

sutney must think oda people's chillen was powerful hongry."

Liza's part was to prepare the chickens, and the house-girl was sent off in the buggy to buy a half dozen small-sized plates, Mrs. Pinner holding that children would never be satisfied to eat out of grown folks' plates at a party.

"Who all is comin' to de pawty, anyway, Miss Mary?" asked Liza.

"Kit and Buz," said Mary.

"Reckon dey'll be 'spected to stuff cakes 'tween times," said Liza. "Mis' Pinna, is we gunno make ice cream?"

"Of course, we are going to make ice cream," said Mrs. Pinner. "Who ever heard of a party without ice cream?"

"What's the fracas?" inquired Mr. Pinner, appearing on the scene.

"I've been asked a foolish question," said Mrs. Pinner, in her most pleasant voice. "I didn't know I had such a dumb darky on the place. I've been asked, mind you, father! if we're going to have ice cream at the party. Did you ever hear of a party without ice cream?"

"Never!" said Mr. Pinner.

"I have," said Mary, "but they're not so nice as parties with ice cream."

"Not near as nice, are they, honey?" asked Mr. Pinner.

"No, not near," returned Mary, gravely.

"Everybody seems to have a finger in the pie but me," declared the old gentleman. "It isn't fair!"

"Miss Mary she done measured de suga'," said Liza, with a gleam in her eyes.

"You are to go for the little girl and boy, father, you know that," said Mrs. Pinner, bustling across to the pantry. "You must go early so as to give the folks time to dress them."

"Ain't de baby comin'?" inquired Liza.

"Hush!" ordered the old lady. "No, Liza, the baby isn't coming. No child of that age is to run the risk of sunstroke riding around in this weather. I am going to carry Mary to see the baby soon as ever I get the time."

"I'm going to see the baby," said Mary to herself. "I'm going to see the baby." It was like a happy little song. Yes, she could sing. She could not have sung yesterday for the lady teacher down in the hollow, but she could sing

now. She almost wished that Mr. and Mrs. Pinner would ask her to sing.

"There was a little girl,
And she had a little curl,
It hung way down on her forehead.
When she was good, she was very, very good,
And when she was bad she was horrid."

She could sing that; she could sing Yankee Doodle; the old gentleman would be sure to like Yankee Doodle. "Grandpa would like Yankee Doodle," she said to herself, and then she said, and even the little voice in her heart was timid, "Maybe grandma would like it too."

Mr. Pinner went off in the carriage directly after lunch, the black boy beside him, but when the carriage returned with its load Job was sitting like a lady in the back, his legs crossed comfortably, and showing every tooth in his head. Occupying the front seat with Mr. Pinner were Kit and Buz, and Buz had possession of the reins.

"Here they come!" cried Mrs. Pinner.

"Does the dog bite?" called Kit's clear voice.

"I ain't 'fraid," declared the fearless Buz. "Mary, see me jump!"

"Count three first," ordered Kit.

"One, two, free!" exclaimed the little boy, and he reached the gate with a slide.

"Well, did I ever!" cried the old lady.

"Watch me! One, two, three! There!" and Kit stood, smiling in triumph half a yard inside the gate.

"Your feet's bigger," grumbled Buz, "your legs zlonger too."

"I beat a boy! I beat a boy!" yelled Kit.

"Well, if children aren't the funniest things," said Mrs. Pinner, shaking with laughter. "I want to see you two kiss your sister 'How-do-do,' and then I want to tell you something."

Bashfully and obediently the children kissed, then Kit exclaimed, "Now, tell us."

"It's just this," said Mrs. Pinner. "While you're here I want you to call me grandma and the old gentleman who drove you over grandpa."

"All right," said Kit.

"All zright," echoed Buz, beaming.

'You thought you were driving, didn't you, Buz?" said Kit. "I knew you weren't. Grandpa had the reins behind your hands. That's why Job was laughing."

"'Tain't so," said Buz, his round face clouding. "Did drive the orzes."

"You oughtn't to tease him, he's so little," said the old lady to Kit. "I am sure that grandpa will let him drive home."

"I fought he was a drandpa," said Buz, beaming again.

"Now, you may just play wherever you like," said Mrs. Pinner; "you've the whole afternoon for we're not going to have the party till supper-time."

"Just takes to eat now," said Buz, already catching sight of the last lot of little cakes that were cooling.

Liza giggled as she handed the cakes round, and then the three of them started off to play.

My! the rumpus that was in the old house that afternoon! My! the gymnastics and the whooping on the lawn with the old dog's voice in the chorus! Mr. and Mrs. Pinner, sitting on the porch, laughed and listened.

"There! tore my sleeve!" cried Buz, from the yard.

"Well, Buz"—that was Kit of course, "you

The Party
Down to the pond to look at the ducks

tear yourself all you want to-day. You don't belong to her to-day."

"Tore ozer sleeve!" announced Buz, in wild delight.

The three children raced up to the barn to look at the pony and down to the pond to look at the ducks, but much to the amusement of Mr. and Mrs. Pinner, it was the strange little girl who led the way.

"They get a heap of comfort out of her at the yellow house, I reckon," said the old lady.

"Did you see the boy driving?" asked the old gentleman. "There, they come back. Look at his legs, will you, mother?"

Mrs. Pinner looked at the boy's legs as he threw all his energy into the race; then she looked at Mr. Pinner and said,

"Father, you know that we wanted a girl."

"I'm perfectly satisfied, mother," said Mr. Pinner.

"She'll be exactly what we were after, in a little while," said Mrs. Pinner. "There, look in the swing!"

In the swing was Kit, standing, fearless, strong, glowing.

"I didn't know she was so pretty."

The old gentleman was looking. "She certainly is pretty," he said.

"They dress her well at the yellow house. I guess she gives them a lot of pleasure already."

"I'm satisfied with what we've got," said Mr. Pinner.

"I think I'll call them up and ask them whether they'll have tea or coffee at the party," said the old lady, laughing again. "Children, children, come here, I've something to say to you."

"Wait till I die," called Kit, but the process being a slow one she overtook Mary and Buz.

"I want to ask the company," said Mrs. Pinner, with becoming gravity, "whether they wish tea or coffee at the party."

"Tea," said Kit.

"Toffee!" cried the little boy.

"You've got an awful nice house," said Katharine Daingerfield, while her brother and sister, following her example, seated themselves upon the porch steps. "I counted the rooms. Fifteen rooms, yes, there were, Buz, without the three dear little rooms in the cellar."

"Dot nice orzes," said Buz.

"The black boy wouldn't let us ride Mary's pony," said Kit.

"Drandpa will let us," said Buz, starting up.

Mr. Pinner rose upon his feet with alacrity.

"To be sure they must have a ride on the pony, mother," he said.

"I just love it here!" cried Kit, ecstatically.

"Dood-bye, drandma," called Buz, affably.

"We'll be back," said Kit, convincingly. "I want to take a good long rest in the swing before I go to the party."

"And eat little takes," added Buz, serenely.

Kit was in the lead, when the children answered the call to the party.

"Now, look here," said the old lady, "father and I will come to the party, if you wish, but if you'd rather we'd stay away, why, that'll be all right."

"Oh, everybody wants you to come to the party," cried Mary.

"Why, you just must come to the party, grandma," said Kit, and she took hold of Mrs. Pinner's hand.

"You must tome to party, too, drandpa," said

Buz, and he put his sturdy arms around the old gentleman's waist and pulled.

"I don't wonder that she misses them, father," said Mrs. Pinner.

"Nor I either," said Mr. Pinner.

"Laws, de chillen is hongry, Mis' Pinna," said Liza, as she passed the chicken a second time. "I neva seen anybawdy leetle as dat boy eat as much as he do. Good he's goin' home in de kerridge."

"I's a man," declared Buz.

"Miss Jane doesn't think Buz is a man," said Kit; "she thinks he's a baby."

"Ain't a baby," retorted Buz, "I's a man, so zam, Miss Tit."

"Miss Jane," continued the garrulous Katharine, "got mad with Buz because he spilled jelly all over the table-cloth."

"Oh, Buz, you didn't spill jelly all over the table-cloth?" cried Mary, and Mr. and Mrs. Pinner exchanged glances appreciative of the condemnatory accent in the voice of their little girl.

"Did!" said Buz.

"Miss Jane put him to bed at six o'clock," continued Kit. "Didn't she, Buz?"

"Yes," answered Buz, his little round face indignant, "put me to bed zix o'clock."

"But Buz got even," concluded Kit. "Buz, tell everybody what you wouldn't do. Look at grandpa, he's your favorite, and tell him what you wouldn't do."

A queer little smile of satisfaction dawned upon the round face as Buz turned his eyes to grandpa. "Wouldn't tall her mamma for free whole days," he said.

"Buz," cried Mary, "you don't call Miss Jane Harrington mamma?"

"Didn't tall her mamma for free whole days," repeated Buz, triumphantly.

"I just call that a shame, father," cried Mrs. Pinner. "I don't wonder somebody is hurt. 'Mamma,' indeed, and she never so much as married!"

"Isn't Miss Jane Harrington married?" asked Kit, in wild astonishment. "Oh, Buz, you just tell her you heard she wasn't married."

"All zright," said Buz.

"Buz is awful bad," explained Kit, suddenly growing virtuous. "The reason I said I would take tea instead of coffee is because my new mamma doesn't let me drink coffee."

"My new mamma don't let me ezer," said Buz, speaking very quickly, "but I ain't mindin' my new mamma to-day."

"The cunning little mortal!" cried grandma, while grandpa shook all over.

"Tit lives wis omans," said Buz.

But Katharine Daingerfield was too happy to be teased.

"I know I do," she said.

"I don't live wis no omans," said Buz.

"You don't?" cried Mrs. Pinner, in astonishment. "Why, Buz, who was it put you to bed if it wasn't a woman?"

"Miss Dane put me to bed," said Buz.

"He means," explained Kit, "that Mrs. Jones isn't a lady."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Pinner. "I wouldn't say that if I were you."

"She puts her own knife in the butter," said Kit.

Buz laughed appreciatively.

"She makes a noise when she drinks her coffee."

"Makes noise when drinks toffee," echoed Buz. He lifted his cup and drank the contents and set it down with a contented gasp.

"There, Buz," cried Kit, "you made a noise yourself."

"Didn't!" protested Buz.

"Everybody heard you," said Kit. "Five people heard you, grandma and grandpa and Mary and Liza and me. I guess you ain't a gentleman, Buz."

"I am a gentleman, so zam," said Buz.

"Maybe some day he'll be a gentleman," said Kit, "because he lives with a lady, but I certainly am glad that my woman mamma doesn't put me to bed at six o'clock in the evening; I certainly am. She lets me stay up just as long as ever I wish. I nearly always go to sleep on the lounge."

"Wish I lived wis omans mamma," said Buz, sorrowfully.

"Somebody isn't saying a word but she's thinking a whole lot," said Mrs. Pinner. "The two of them are a wild little team, aren't they,

father? It makes a person feel young to have them around. Buz, I think I'll mend your sleeves for you before I let grandpa carry you back to Miss Jane."

"You needn't, grandma," said Kit. "Buz is going to do something that I told him next time Miss Jane puts him to bed. And don't forget, Buz, to tell her that you heard she wasn't married."

"Want my zleeves mended!" howled Buz.

The little boy's sleeves were mended nicely when he climbed in beside grandpa to go home, and proudly took possession of the lines.

"Div me whip," he ordered. "Doin' to make orzes do fast."

"I wish I had a little pony like Mary's to take home with me," said Kit, jealously. "I know something else I wish. I wish I was going to live here all the time."

"Me too!" cried Buz.

"Did you both kiss your sister good-bye?" asked Mrs. Pinner, from the gateway.

The two heads nodded emphatically.

"Did you tell her you would come to see her again?"

"I'll come whenever she gives a party," said Kit. "I'll come to-morrow if she gives a party and lets me ride on her pony."

"And see ducks and zwing," said Buz.

"Well, good-bye to you both," said the old lady.

"Dood-bye, drandma," said Buz. "Now, I want the whip. I want the orzes to dit up fast."

"Good-bye, grandma," said Kit, "take good care of yourself. I want to tell you something. Grandpa, don't let Buz whip the horses till grandma comes over here and lets me whisper something to her. I've got to whisper it because it wouldn't be quite polite to say it out loud."

"I certainly do want to hear badly," said Mrs. Pinner, advancing close to the carriage.

Kit leaned forward, put her mouth to the old lady's ear and whispered:

"Don't tell anybody, but you're my favorite."

"Oh, I dot som'n to tell Mary," cried Buz. "Mary, 'deed and double, the baby is doin' to do to Balt'more."

"There! Buz Daingerfield," cried Kit, "didn't grandpa ask you not to say anything to Mary

about the baby going to the orphan asylum? I just knew you'd do it."

"Didn't say nosin' 'bout baby doin' to or'n 'zylum," said Buz. "I said he was doin' to do to Balt'more, and so he is."

It was Mr. Pinner who touched the horses with the whip.

CHAPTER IX

Mary Writes to Dave

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Mary Writes to Dave

MRS. PINNER'S little girl watched the carriage out of sight. The party was over, and Kit and Buz were speeding back to the yellow house and the Harrington cottage, but it was of neither Kit nor Buz that she was thinking.

"Do you believe it's true that our baby is going to an orphan asylum?" she asked, her brown eyes seeking the eyes of the old lady.

"Oh, I reckon it isn't true," said Mrs. Pinner. "The folks back of the post-office were too glad to get hold of a baby ever to give it to an asylum. Father will tell us when he gets back that it isn't true."

Upon his return, however, the old gentleman acknowledged that it was true.

When Mrs. Pinner cried out that it was a shame and asked if something couldn't be done to stop it, Mr. Pinner shook his head.

"You said you would take me to see the baby," said Mary.

"So we did," said Mr. Pinner, "and I wish we had done it, little girl, but it's too late now. Yes, mother, they carried the child to Baltimore this afternoon."

"Mary," said Mrs. Pinner, "you mustn't go and take this thing hard. Why, bless me! the baby's too little to understand anything about an orphan asylum, and I'm sure Kit and Buz didn't seem to mind."

She lifted Mary to her lap and tried to reason with her.

"The baby will be taken care of in the asylum, ten chances to one," she said, emphatically, "better than it ever was taken care of back of the post-office. The asylum folks are trained to give proper attention to babies. By the time your little brother is running around the place I know he'll be so pretty that somebody nice will just want him badly. I hope rich folks will adopt him outright. Look here, father, I don't believe this little girl fully appreciates being adopted outright. I guess I didn't explain it right. You tell her all it means."

"Never mind about that now," said the old gentleman, "she's our little girl and may be some

day she'll be glad of it. I am sure that some day she'll be glad of it."

"I wish the baby were sitting on my lap," said Mary.

"I wish so too," said the old lady, "but I'd have to ask you to sit in your little chair. Honey, 'pon my honor, I'd send for the baby to-morrow only I never was good at looking after a very young child. He's a heap better off at the asylum than he was in the house back of the post-office, for I have a poor opinion of the Wilsons for letting him go, and he's better off than he would be here at Hayfields."

The little girl slid off the old lady's lap and crept away to her room.

Mrs. Pinner heaved a sigh.

"I dare say the party has been a failure too," she said.

"Oh, no, the party was all right," said Mr. Pinner. "I'm sure it won't hurt a bit to have a party every now and then."

"Dear knows! we try to please her," said Mrs. Pinner. "Yes, father, she's a sweet little thing, but how long is it going to take her to learn to be glad that she's living at Hayfields?"

"How long has she been here?" asked Mr. Pinner.

"Nearly two months," answered the old lady, and sighed again.

"May be when she begins to go to school things'll be different."

"I hope so but I don't feel sure."

The little girl at the cherry desk in the pretty room was almost sure that her heart was breaking as she wrote these words in her diary:

"The Wilsons have sent the baby to Baltimore to an orphan asylum and I don't know what to do about it. Cousin Cynthia ought to be told."

Mary closed the diary and leaning her elbows on the desk prepared to think the question out bravely. She was not going to cry. Crying would not do any good, it would only bring Mrs. Pinner into the room. Perhaps if she thought for a long, long time there might come to her some way to get the baby out of the orphan asylum, for certainly the Daingerfield baby must be taken out of the orphan asylum. Her Cousin Cynthia had written to her once, the letter was safe in a pigeon-hole.

Cousin Cynthia had said that she would like her cousin's little people all to live together, but she was poor and could hardly make ends meet. Mary herself had some money. Mr. Pinner had given her a little iron bank and a ten dollar gold piece. She did not know whether a ten dollar gold piece would pay her Cousin Cynthia's way from Boston to Baltimore and back, but she hoped it would, for it seemed to her, the more she thought, that Cousin Cynthia was the person to get the baby out of the asylum. She realized that it would be a delicate undertaking to tell Cousin Cynthia that her first cousin's baby, her own little cousin, was in an orphan asylum, for it certainly was as sad as if the baby were dead. People always sent some one to tell you when anybody was dead. The doctor had come to the little house in Willowbrook to break the news when her papa had died at the hospital. She did not know any doctor in Boston or she would write to him. Then a bright idea came to her. New York was not very far from Boston. She would write to Dave Pinner and ask him to go to Boston and break the sad news to her Cousin Cynthia. If he were like either his

father or his mother he would do it. She would obtain Dave's address and write at once.

"Grandma," said a timid little voice in the sitting-room. The name had come so easily to Kit and Buz, strange that it was so difficult to her. The old lady was dozing in her chair. She started, almost thinking it was the other little girl, but she was pleased that it was Mary.

"Well, honey?" she asked.

"Would you care if I were to write a letter to your son in New York?"

"What's that?" cried the old gentleman.

"I want to write a letter to your son," said Mary, bashfully.

My! how the two old people laughed! They could not help it.

"Dave will be tickled to death," said the old lady, recovering herself. "Why should I care, Mary? Why, I'm just delighted, and so is father."

"Surely," said Mr. Pinner. "Dave certainly will appreciate the letter."

"I will have to have the address," said the little girl. "Will you please give me the address, grandma?"

"Open the cupboard door and read it off to her, father," ordered the old lady, and the old gentleman obeyed.

Mary had a piece of paper and a pencil and she wrote the address as Mr. Pinner read it.

And this was the letter enclosed in the envelope addressed to Mr. David Pinner, of New York City:

"DEAR MR. DAVE PINNER:

"My name is Mary Daingerfield. I live at Hayfields. Perhaps your father and mother have told you about me. They took me because my mamma and papa are dead and Cousin Cynthia could not keep all us children together. She did not have the money to do it. I want to ask of you a big favor. I hope you will do it for me. Somebody has to break the news to Cousin Cynthia that the Wilsons have sent our baby off to the orphan asylum in Baltimore. I want you to do it. I do not know any doctor and New York is not far from Boston in the geography. I cut off Cousin Cynthia's address and send it to you in this letter. Please do not lose it until you go to Boston. I have answered Cousin Cynthia's letter and do not need it any more. Your father has a nice way of keeping an address. He marks it down on the inside of the cupboard door and it is always there. Your address is on the cupboard door in the dining-room. I did not know it until to-day. I am sure that Cousin Cynthia will manage to get the baby

out of the orphan asylum. It will be better to give it to a nice lady than let it stay there. If I were big I would teach school and keep us all together, but I know that Cousin Cynthia cannot do it for she has her uncle to support and it costs a whole lot to live in Boston. Beefsteak is very high in Boston. I would live here in Maryland where beefsteak is low priced if I were big enough to teach school. I have ten dollars in gold that I will send to Cousin Cynthia to go down to Baltimore to get the baby. I hope it will be enough. I know that gold is worth more than other kind of money. Your father gave me the ten dollars. It is put away in a little bank, but I know he will let me spend it if I want to. Your father and mother are both very good to me. I call them grandpa and grandma now. I hope you do not care.

"Your little friend,
"MARY DAINGERFIELD.

"P. S. I think the picture of your sister Mary is very pretty and I think it is very sad that she died when she was a little girl. If I were you I would come home. Hayfields is a beautiful place and I think your father needs you very much."

Mary waited patiently for an answer to her letter. It came in the course of a week.

"It's from Dave," said Mrs. Pinner, looking curiously at the envelope. "Mary, I wonder what you and Dave are corresponding about!

There! take the letter. You needn't tell us if you don't want."

"Is it a letter from Dave?" cried the old gentleman, cheerfully. "After you read it you must tell mother and me how Dave is."

The little girl stood undecided. Was it right that she should carry a letter from Dave Pinner off to her room, as she carried her letters from aunty? Dave belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Pinner.

"It's about something I asked him," she said, timidly.

Then the old lady began laughing and said, "Run along."

"There's no use talking, father," said Mrs. Pinner, "she isn't a bit like our Mary. I'm dying with curiosity to know what she wrote to Dave."

"Perhaps Dave will write, too, and let the cat out of the bag," said the old gentleman, hopefully.

"Don't you think I ought to call you niece?" Dave wrote in his letter after beginning it, "Dear little Mary." "It seems to me that I must be a sort of uncle of yours the way things go. I received your letter and contents noted. I will

take good care of the address and I certainly will run up to Boston some day and see your Cousin Cynthia and tell her that she must, by all means, go down to Baltimore and get the baby out of the orphan asylum. I am sure the gold piece will be plenty of money to pay traveling expenses both ways. But my stars! you don't know what a fine place an orphan asylum is, little girl. I believe the baby has the best of it. An orphan asylum isn't nearly as lonely as Hayfields. It's full to overflowing with babies. I was in one the other day for the first time in my life. I'll tell you what to do. Ask mother to take you to the Baltimore asylum to see the baby, then you'll feel all right. But I'll do what you ask in due time. I think it is very nice of you to call my father and mother 'grandpa' and 'grandma.' If there is anything else I can do for you don't hesitate to write and let me know."

She must wait again, for it did not seem, according to the letter, that Dave Pinner was going to Boston in a hurry. She hoped that he would not lose her Cousin Cynthia's address and wished that it, too, were marked in chalk on the inside of the cupboard door.

That day at the dinner table Mary asked Mr. Pinner a question, looking up at him very seriously.

"Grandpa," she asked, "what is 'contents noted'?"

"What's that?" cried Mr. Pinner, for the voice was not very loud.

"She says what is 'contents noted,' father?" explained the old lady.

"Oh!" said Mr. Pinner.

"Don't you understand? It's part of Dave's letter."

"Oh!" said the old gentleman, smiling. "Why, honey, it means that Dave gave his attention to everything that was in that letter of yours. Of course he did."

"What does 'in due time' mean?" asked Mary.

"I am sure it means right away, instanter," said Mr. Pinner.

But it was a whole month later that Mary Daingerfield gave Dave's letter to Dave's mother to read.

"Well, father, isn't this too cute of her?" asked the old lady. "Dave tells her to ask

mother to carry her to Baltimore to see the baby. She couldn't screw up her courage to ask me so she's let me see the letter at last."

"What about the baby?" asked Mr. Pinner.

"Why, the letter's all about the baby. Mary, may I read it to father?"

"Yes," said Mary, meekly, but she went out on the porch while Mrs. Pinner read the letter at the top of her voice.

"That's a nice letter," said the old gentleman. "I wish Dave would run up to Boston to see Miss Daingerfield. I just wish he would."

"He's promised," said Mrs. Pinner. "Doesn't Dave keep his promises, father?"

"I believe he does, only he's pretty slow sometimes. I'd like him to run up to Boston soon to see Mary's cousin. I'd like to hear how she is."

"It's a wonder she didn't give me the letter before she started in to school," said the old lady. "I guess her Cousin Cynthia is busy with her school, too. You're right, father, she certainly is a sweet little woman. I don't know when I ever saw manners that pleased me more. Mary!" she called.

The little girl answered the call promptly.

"I am going to take you to Baltimore to see the baby," she said, "but I must wait for it to get cooler; this fall is as warm as summer-time, and I can't stand traveling in hot weather. Father, the next time you ride to Willowbrook get the address of the asylum, will you?"

"I certainly will," said the old gentleman.

Mr. Pinner rode to Willowbrook especially to secure the address and Mrs. Pinner put it carefully away, but it was a long time before the prospective trip came off.

Dave Pinner's next letter was to his mother. In it he said: "Tell my niece that I have been to Boston and seen her Cousin Cynthia and that I am going to run up again to discuss the important question of getting the Daingerfield baby out of the orphan asylum."

Mrs. Pinner was very much pleased with this letter. She read the sentence about the trip to Boston three times aloud to Mr. Pinner, and she gave him a queer little look that Mary did not understand.

"I certainly am glad he is going back," said Mr. Pinner.

"Cousin Cynthia ought to have written me

about the money," said Mary. "I don't know whether it's enough or not. I wish she would go and get the baby right away."

"Before you and I get to Baltimore?" cried the old lady. "Father, I had better bestir myself and go or Dave will have it against me."

"I think Cousin Cynthia will go to Baltimore pretty soon," said the little girl.

"Honey," said Mrs. Pinner, "if I were you I would give up expecting all that on the part of my cousin, I certainly would. She's busy with her school work, you know."

She had not thought of that. Neither had Mr. Dave Pinner.

"He said that he was going back to talk about the baby," she said, insistently.

"So he did," agreed Mrs. Pinner, "but Dave said that the asylum was a lively place and he'd like you to see it. Father, Dave must have been very much pleased to tell us right out that he was going back."

Mary Daingerfield went to school five days in the week, Mr. Pinner seeing her safely over the road, sometimes on horseback and again in the buggy; always in the buggy when it was raining.

The weather had turned very cool the day after Mrs. Pinner put the asylum address in the little drawer of her bureau, but it was cold indeed before she arranged the day for the trip to Baltimore.

"It's a journey for me, father," she said. "I mortally hate to ride in the cars, and I don't like to leave you over night, for a fact I don't; you're an old man and you're not strong."

"Never mind about me," said Mr. Pinner. "I can get along very well."

"Dave certainly wasn't thinking of you," said Mrs. Pinner, "when he proposed my going to the asylum. I'm afraid he doesn't realize that neither of us is young any more."

The journey to Baltimore was a tedious one. The old lady was tired and cross the greater part of the way, declaring again and again that she was too old for such a car ride, and that it was a shame for a woman in her sober senses to come away and leave an old husband with nobody but servants.

"If anything happens to grandpa to-night, Mary," she said, "do you think I will ever get over it?"

Did she mean if grandpa were to die in the night?

When they reached the city they went directly to a hotel.

In the morning the old lady was still in a fussy mood. She had not spent a night away from Hayfields for fifteen years and she wondered aloud and dejectedly how grandpa had stood it. Little Mary Daingerfield felt very miserable as she thought first of an awful night at Hayfields with the kind old gentleman ill in his bed and Liza and none of them knowing what to do, and then of the orphan asylum whither they were going to see little Sterling Frederick Mortimer Daingerfield, named for an officer in the Revolutionary War.

CHAPTER X

At the Asylum

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MRS. PINNER and the little girl were received very graciously at the asylum. The matron herself conducted them through the room of the little children on up-stairs to the room of the toddlers. Baby Daingerfield, as he was called, was in the latter room.

All around the children's room there were long, low benches, and here and there out on the floor was a little rocking-chair. There were several small tables, with little straight chairs in their neighborhood, and a plentiful sprinkling of miscellaneous toys. More than one little girl affectionately hugged a dolly as large as herself and a dozen little boys were marching to the beat of a drum. Such a scene, no doubt, had greeted the eyes of Mr. David Pinner, but the blue blood in the veins of Mary rebelled at the thought that Cousin Cynthia had not promptly taken their baby away.

"Her first cousin's child," thought the quaint little girl, "her own little cousin."

"Well," Mrs. Pinner was saying to the matron, "it certainly is a nice place. I am sure they have a good time together. I don't know whether I ever saw so many children at one time. This little girl of mine has been wanting to see the baby very badly. Isn't it a nice place, Mary?"

"It's an *orphan asylum*," said Mary.

"Yes, but Dave was right, an orphan asylum is a mighty fine institution. My son in New York," she explained to the matron, "wrote to Mary here and told her to ask me to carry her over to Baltimore. She's the kind to worry about things, and she's been worrying about the baby. Dave said he thought that if she could see an orphan asylum she'd be satisfied."

"Just wait till she sees the baby," said the matron, smiling.

They entered the room of the toddlers and the matron and Mrs. Pinner drew back, interested and alert.

Mary looked about. There were perhaps fifty toddlers in the room. They all wore little long-

sleeved gingham aprons. A little boy was running at full tilt toward a woman who was sitting on the floor with her arms outstretched. Curls had grown on the bald head and Baby Daingerfield was taller and broader, but he gave his little old-time scream as he ran, and the same little old-time stumble into the outstretched arms. Just so he used to make for aunty in the little house at Willowbrook. Mary gave a soft cry of wonder and delight and ran to where the curly head was buried on the woman's shoulder. Baby Daingerfield was laughing rapturously.

"He's mine," said Mary, "he's our baby."

"Is that so?" said the woman, and she seemed very much pleased.

Mrs. Pinner and the matron approached.

The baby turned his face about and stared at everybody.

"Baby!" cried Mary, holding out her arms.

"Isn't that just like a little woman?" inquired Mrs. Pinner, and the matron smiled and nodded.

But the baby frowned.

"Why, you ain't afraid of your own sister?" asked the nurse. "You're just cuttin' up, that's it. A smart boy like you ain't never afraid of

his own sister? Why, he's learned a word since he's been at the 'sylum. Just you call him that way again, little girl, and I'm sure he'll act pretty."

But the frog was in Mary's throat, and tears were in her eyes.

"The baby doesn't know me," she faltered.

"Well, I say it's a shame," said Mrs. Pinner, "and she came all the way to Baltimore to see him and stopped over night in a hotel. Never mind, honey!" She took out her watch. "You can play with him for half an hour while I rest in the parlor. He'll soon get to know you. Why, little boy, what are you smiling at me for?"

The next instant the old lady felt the baby's arms embracing her knees.

"He's so fond of ladies," explained the nurse, "and he gets a powerful lot of attention."

"Ma-ma!" lisped Baby Daingerfield.

"There, he's said his word!" cried the nurse.

"The poor little mites," said the matron, "they think every lady is a mamma."

"Bless his heart, did he call me mamma?" exclaimed the old lady, in a glow of pleasure,

"The baby doesn't know me" she faltered

and she stooped and lifted the little fellow from the floor. He was well satisfied.

Then the matron proposed that Baby Daingerfield spend the half hour in the parlor with the visitors, and he went down-stairs in Mrs. Pinner's arms.

"If I thought I could take proper care of him I'd carry him home," declared the old lady.

"Ever so many people want him," said the matron, "but we've orders not to put him up for adoption."

"Well!" cried Mrs. Pinner, "who gave those orders?"

She had not thought of any one having the right to give orders about the Daingerfield baby.

"Why, his guardian to be sure," answered the matron, "Miss Daingerfield, of Boston."

"Oh!"

The "Oh!" came from the lips of the meek little girl. It was full of surprise and dismay. Her Cousin Cynthia wanted the baby to stay at the orphan asylum.

"Grandma," she said with a dry little sob, "Cousin Cynthia wouldn't care if you'd take him. He's more to me anyway than he is to

Cousin Cynthia. *I* say you can have him, grandma, *I* say you can take him back to Hayfields. He isn't Cousin Cynthia's to give away, he's mine."

Mrs. Pinner looked at the matron instead of at that wistful, uplifted face.

"I ought never to have brought her to Baltimore," she said. "I ought to have had the sense to know how it would be. But Dave wrote and Mr. Pinner wouldn't give me any peace till I started. For the first time in my life I was ready to go back on my word and get out of this trip, for I dreaded it on my own account, I do so mortal hate car-riding. I ought to have had the gumption to stay at home on somebody else's account."

"She'll be over it by to-morrow," said the matron.

"Don't you believe it!" cried the old lady, "but oh, dear me, I wish you were right, I do, indeed. We've had her ever since the middle of July, and if ever two people have showered the best they've got on one little girl, father and I have done it; but I believe Mary here would rather live in a shanty with Kit and Buz and the

baby than have her nice little room at Hayfields."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't," said the matron, "you're maligning her, Mrs. Pinner; I know little girls better than that."

"Mary, tell the truth, wouldn't you?" asked the old lady.

"I wouldn't like Kit and Buz and the baby to live in a shanty," said Mary, politely.

"But if they did live in a shanty, they and the black woman, you'd rather be with them than over at Hayfields? Say yes or no."

"Yes," said Mary, and drooped her little brown head very low.

For a quarter of an hour she had the baby to herself in one corner of the asylum parlor; then she hugged him and kissed him and walked backward out of the room. Soon afterward she was sitting in a cab with Mrs. Pinner, rolling over the Baltimore cobble-stones on the way to the train.

Mr. Pinner met them at the gate at the very end of the journey. He was well and smiling. Supper was on the table, he announced; they must come in and rest and then he had some-

thing to show them. He looked at Mrs. Pinner and said in an undertone:

"It came at an opportune moment, eh, mother?"

Mrs. Pinner, however, was tired and cross.

"I don't believe it's a bit of use, father," she said. "I have about come to the conclusion that you and I are piling up disappointments for ourselves straight along. You've been disappointed so many times in your life that I feel as if I just didn't want you to be disappointed any more, as if I couldn't bear it."

She was tired and sick and nervous from her journey.

"Tut, tut!" said the old gentleman. "You'll feel better after you eat your supper."

"Oh, I'm hungry," said Mrs. Pinner, "and I'll look at it all right after supper, but I don't believe it'll give any great pleasure. You know that you were mighty sore about the pony. You thought for a while that the pony would satisfy."

"Dexter is a very useful little animal," said Mr. Pinner, "and somebody thinks a whole heap of him, I know she does. But ponies are nicer

in the summer-time than in cold weather. There are some other things that give more pleasure in the winter-time than a pony."

"Mary would rather live in a shanty with the black woman and Kit and Buz and the baby than here at Hayfields with us, father, that's a fact."

"Oh, no," said the old gentleman, "you're making a mistake, mother, Mary Daingerfield doesn't want to live in a shanty."

Mrs. Pinner's little girl quietly ate her toast and quietly drank her tea, not very much of either. She felt sorry for Mr. and Mrs. Pinner, and she felt sorry for herself, but her mamma's arms had been around her and her mamma's voice had said: "Mary, you will promise to take care of Kit and Buz and the baby." Mr. and Mrs. Pinner did not understand why it was that she felt as she did toward Kit and Buz and the baby. They had chosen her on account of her brown hair and her brown eyes and because her name was Mary, but they had wanted a little girl who would make Hayfields lively; a sensible head and a heart like the little white calf's were troublesome things in an adopted child.

"Now, mother, are you rested well enough to look at it?" asked Mr. Pinner.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Pinner. "Come, Mary!"

Mr. Pinner proudly led the way to the parlor. The hanging lamp in the centre of the room had been lighted and turned high. A fire was burning briskly on the hearth; warmth and comfort greeted them in the parlor. And there at the end of the long room was a beautiful upright piano.

"Father, it *is* pretty!" cried the old lady.

"Mary, what do you see?" asked the old gentleman.

"I see a piano," said Mary.

"Who do you think it's for?"

The child did not speak.

"You know who it's for, don't you, Mary?" asked Mrs. Pinner.

The brown head nodded.

"She'll sit at it in the evenings and play for us, mother, just like she plays for the teacher down at the school. We don't want to miss all the music," said Mr. Pinner, cheerfully.

"Go sit on the stool for father and let him see how you look," ordered Mrs. Pinner.

Slowly the little girl obeyed. The old gentleman was at the stool before her; he screwed it to suit her height and then walked away, backward, admiration glowing in his face.

"There we are!" he cried, jovially. "If somebody wasn't so tired I'd ask for a little tune, just the notes, you know, mother."

"Mary, strike the notes," said Mrs. Pinner.

Three notes were struck, then the brown head went down on the keys of the piano and somebody's legs felt very long as they hung from the stool.

"She's tired with her journey," said Mr. Pinner.

"Yes, she's tired," agreed Mrs. Pinner, "and I'm tired too; but I'm tired of more things than the journey. I'm tired, father, seeing you day after day laying yourself out to please and always failing. We've made a mistake. We might have known there could be only one Mary Pinner."

"One Mary Pinner?" questioned the old gentleman, and his eyes turned to the painting on the parlor wall. It looked blurred from where he stood.

"Yes," continued the old lady, in a loud voice, "we oughtn't to have been so taken with her name and her curls and her brown eyes. I'm not blaming the child, mind, she can't help it that she hasn't been able to give even a little bit of her heart to you and me, father."

"She calls us grandpa and grandma," said Mr. Pinner, in gentle rebuke.

"She does it because she thinks we ought to get a little something for all we give, but it keeps her thinking hard to do it," declared the old lady. "For a little while she didn't call us anything, you remember, and set us foolishly rejoicing. Then with a terrible effort came the 'grandpa' and 'grandma.' When we're acting real nice we're called what we asked to be called, what we thought we had a right to be called when we took her in the law, but now and then, when we don't happen to be smirking and smiling, and when she's dead in earnest herself, the 'Mr. Pinner' and 'Mrs. Pinner' slip out. Haven't you noticed? The other one calls us 'grandpa' and 'grandma' as if she was glad to do it. We wanted a little girl to laugh about the place and make things lively, you know we

did; and we're disappointed, you know we are. We were foolish in our choice, we ought to have taken Kit; she wouldn't have been grieving her heart out."

"Yes, she would, yes, she would," said the old gentleman.

Mrs. Pinner indulged in a mirthless laugh. "Don't you believe it, father," she said. "Kit's happy at the yellow house."

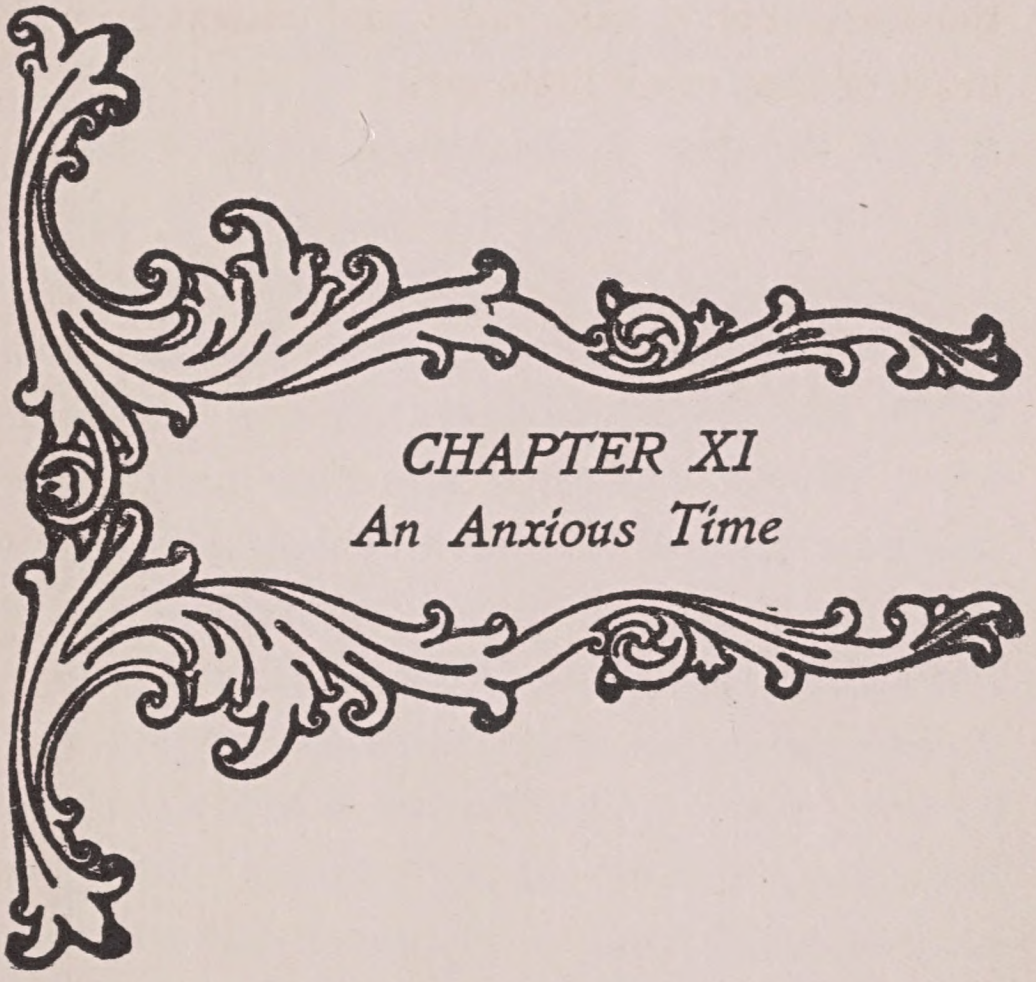
"I meant this one would be grieving her heart out wherever she was," said Mr. Pinner; "our taking Kit would not have made it any better for this one." He walked over to the piano stool and laid his hand gently upon the little brown head.

"Mother," he said, "you're all tired out with your trip, but I don't want you ever to think for a moment that I'm not satisfied with our little girl."

He remembered that hug and the whispered words. He understood now that she had not been thinking of her own pleasure when she asked him to let her have a horse; she had simply wanted to borrow a horse; to get bravely upon its back and ride to her own; and he loved her and honored her for it.

"We are not the ones to grumble, mother," he murmured. "Haven't we hungered for Dave for over twenty years?"

The brown head felt the hand patting it affectionately, but a wild hope had dawned in the heart of that meek little girl.



CHAPTER XI

An Anxious Time

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LITTLE Mary Daingerfield screwed up her courage to the sticking-point and sought the presence of Mrs. Pinner.

The old lady was knitting, that was a good thing; she was always complacent and would rather listen than talk when her needles were flying. She nodded in answer to Mary's request to "say something."

The matter had been thoroughly thought over, the courage was screwed up to the sticking-point, but for all that it was difficult to begin. For an instant the brown eyes looked far away, then they returned resolutely to the face of the old lady.

This was the weighty proposition, in Mary's own words:

"Mrs. Pinner, I want you to ask grandpa"—the old lady felt a twinge of conscience at the "Mrs. Pinner" and the "grandpa"—"to let you

trade me off for Kit. You can't help it if you did make a mistake but you will never be disappointed with Kit. She's been here to three parties and you haven't got tired of her yet. Kit shows right out when she likes things and she will tell you all the time how much she likes the pretty little room and the pony and the piano and everything. Grandpa said last night when you said that you ought to have chosen Kit instead of me, that I would be grieving wherever I was. You tell him that I won't"—here she spoke very fast—"I am much older than Kit, and I will ask the Joneses to let me get the baby out of the orphan asylum. I think they will, because Kit says Mrs. Jones was half sorry she didn't take the baby too, and I know that Cousin Cynthia will be glad, she only meant that strange people should not have the baby. Then I will be near Buz. Kit gets Buz into so much trouble, and they are both little. You tell grandpa that if he lets you trade me for Kit, I won't be grieving but will be happy and content." Then the brown eyes drooped and Mary added, vehemently, "Mrs. Pinner, if Kit lives at the yellow house, she won't be a lady."

The knitting was lying in a heap on the floor when Mrs. Pinner asked gravely,

"How about yourself, Mary? Are you sure that you will be a lady if you are brought up at the yellow house?"

"I am so much older than Kit," repeated Mary, "and I'm so different. I think I will be a lady," but a little fear crept into the brown eyes. "Perhaps Mrs. Jones will let me go to the same school with Kit."

"So you think pretty well of the little school, do you?" asked Mrs. Pinner.

"Oh, yes," said Mary, "I think very well of the little school."

"And you are of the opinion that Miss Burdet is a tolerable fair teacher?"

"She's a good teacher," said Mary fervently. "Maybe after a while Miss Jane Harrington would let Buz go to school, too. Miss Burdet would let a boy as little as Buz come to her school, don't you think?"

"I shouldn't wonder!"

"You will ask grandpa?"

"It's this way," said the old lady, gravely,

"there's more than grandpa to give permission; there's the law."

"Oh!" said Mary.

"Yes, indeed, the law will have to be considered."

At this important period of the conversation Mr. Pinner came in.

"What are you two discussing?" he asked.

"We're on the law now," answered the old lady, and she began to laugh.

"I wish you could have heard her, father," she went on, as soon as she had recovered from her laugh. "I never listened to anything cuter or more unselfish than the things this little girl has been saying. No, Mary, don't run away, I want you here."

She put out her hand and reluctantly the little girl came to her side.

"I'm to tell you, father, that if you give her away over to the yellow house she will be perfectly happy."

"How's that?" asked Mr. Pinner, in surprise. "Would she rather be over at the yellow house than here?"

"That's what she said."

"My! My!" said Mr. Pinner

"I would be happy if Kit were here," corrected Mary.

"She wants to be traded for Kit," explained Mrs. Pinner.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Pinner, understandingly. Then he added: "Mother, you're getting paid up for what you said last night. Mary, don't you know that when grandma gets excited she says a whole lot of things that she doesn't mean?"

It almost seemed as if this might be true, there was such a wealth of love expressed in the pressure of the arm that held her.

"She's to get the Joneses to adopt the baby too, and she's going to keep a strict eye on Buz; and, sometimes, I haven't a doubt, she'll slip down to see the black woman, eh, Mary?"

"Yes," whispered Mary.

"Now, father, she wants you to agree to all this. I'm kind of out of it because I'm to come into possession of the other little girl. I wish you had been where you could have heard. She called me 'Mrs. Pinner' every time, but always you were 'grandpa.'"

"I forgot," said Mary.

"You're getting paid back for your tantrum, mother," said the old gentleman.

"I guess so," said the old lady. "I told her that I didn't know how we would manage the law business. Yes, honey, you belong to us, according to the law, and Kit doesn't."

"If I were willing, couldn't the law be changed?" asked Mary.

"Father, what do you say?" asked the old lady.

"Well, well, well!" was all that Mr. Pinner could think of saying.

Then Mrs. Pinner took the little girl upon her lap.

"Honey," she whispered, "listen to me. There's no use talking, you've crept into father's heart and you've crept into mine. I said last night that there was only one Mary Pinner, and that is so. You're not a bit like our little girl that's gone, but you've got cunning ways of your own and you can no more help grieving about the other children than father and I could help grieving about little Mary Pinner and about somebody else too. I was miserable for a whole year after my little girl died and gave no pleasure at all to

the folks around me. It did hurt me that father was so lavish with you, and I thought that it wasn't any use, that you hadn't a bit of love to give to either of us. I wanted your love last night, and I want it now, and I will want it to-morrow. It wasn't the company of the frisky little girl I was hungering for—though I wouldn't mind having that too—it was your affection, you dear, quiet, little thing. I am a mite comforted to-day. I think you love grandpa a little and he is more deserving than I. I think when grandpa touched your little brown head last night and said that he was satisfied, even though you were sitting on the piano stool with your face pressed to the keys while the other one would have been playing whether she knew how or not, that he stirred your heart a little and that you and grandpa are closer because an old woman came back from Baltimore tired and cross."

"I like you, too," said Mary, "but Kit is my sister and Buz is my brother and I can't bear to have the baby live at an orphan asylum, and I promised mamma that I would take care of them."

"Dear heart," said the old lady, softly, "you're too little to do it."

"Would Mary Pinner have been too little if she had had Kit and Buz and the baby to take care of?" asked Mary.

"Did you ever hear the like of that, father?" cried Mrs. Pinner. "I declare I don't know what to do."

Mr. Pinner also was troubled.

"Suppose I write to Dave," he suggested. "Mother, we ought to get that baby out of the asylum."

"I say so too!" cried Mrs. Pinner. "But, father, it will hardly be right for us to meddle. We wanted a little girl and we got her through the kindness of Miss Daingerfield. She is as nice a little woman as I ever met. She must have some intentions about the baby. She has ordered that he isn't to be put up for adoption."

Mr. Pinner was not an interfering man. He heaved a sigh, rose from his chair, and walked the floor.

"Well, anyway," he said, "it won't hurt to write to Dave."

"No, it won't hurt to write to Dave," acquiesced Mrs. Pinner.

But if Dave Pinner said anything about the

Daingerfield baby in that lengthy answer to his father's letter, Mary was not told. There was such an important item in the letter that all minor matters were passed over. Dave was to be married and he was coming home to live. He would be there by Christmas if he possibly could, he hoped to eat the Christmas dinner with them.

The old lady and the old gentleman who had been in the habit of saying anything and everything before the little girl who was theirs in the eyes of the law began to whisper in their happiness over the marriage and the home-coming of Dave, and the little girl grew careful about intruding upon them.

But notwithstanding the utmost care and caution, Mary subsequently learned what was really going to happen. There was talk about a lady and children, muffled and cautious talk about the children. Evidently Dave Pinner was going to marry a widow.

Mr. and Mrs. Pinner had made a greater mistake than they knew when they adopted a little girl according to the law, for, of course, those other children must necessarily be first. Mary Daingerfield was glad of one thing, that she had

not been traded for Kit; it would have been so very hard for Kit. The others would not be exactly grandchildren but they would be very near to it; Dave Pinner's wife would be their mother and Dave Pinner would be their father in the law. But the old gentleman and the old lady were very generous. They were as kind and tender with the little brown-eyed girl as if they still coveted her love, whereas in a little while a wealth of child-love would be poured upon them.

"I love them too," said little Mary, "and so do Kit and Buz, but I'm glad now that Kit isn't here at Hayfields."

She began to think then of that old original plan by which with the help of aunty she could take care of Kit and Buz and the baby. If she were willing and if Mr. and Mrs. Pinner would agree it seemed to her that surely the law might be set aside. She wished that she understood the law about people adopting children and she told herself again and again that Mr. and Mrs. Pinner ought not to have been in such a hurry. They did not need the law to force them to do the just thing toward a child taken for their very own.

She was busy during the day down at the little school where she was getting on nicely with her lessons and her music, and one evening Miss Burdet came to the old house and played an accompaniment while the little girl sang. It was after the teacher had gone home that Mary said,

"Some time, grandma, I want to ask you something."

"Can't you ask it now?" inquired Mrs. Pinner.

"I wish you would say that you would do it before I ask," said the little girl.

"Grandpa did that once and got caught," said Mrs. Pinner, laughing. "I'm afraid, Mary."

"Your son is coming home at Christmas, isn't he?" asked the little girl.

"Yes, Mary," said Mrs. Pinner, "and I am more than glad that I can say it."

"And you're glad he's going to bring his wife, aren't you?"

"Very glad."

"And you're glad he's going to bring the children?" continued the questioner. "You're glad he's going to marry a widow with a whole lot of children, aren't you?"

"Well, well," said the old lady, laughing. "Father, listen! I believe somebody is just a little bit jealous!"

"Mary," she added, "I'm gladder than I can say."

"It will be nice for you and grandpa," said the little girl.

"Mother, it's a shame," said Mr. Pinner. "Look here, Mary, no matter who comes to Hayfields you're not to take a back seat. You're our little girl."

"Only in the law," said Mary.

"I wonder what it is she wants to ask me!" said Mrs. Pinner, when Mary had gone to her bed an hour later.

"She thinks a good deal about the law," said the old gentleman, laughing softly. "Well, well, so you're glad, mother, that Dave is going to marry a widow with a whole lot of children. Shame on you when there's a sweet little girl in the house already."

"Who belongs to us *only in the law*," said Mrs. Pinner. "You noticed how she said that?"

"I noticed. She likes us a good bit, mother, or she could never have used that tone."

"It's a wonder she ever tells me anything the way I laugh right out," said the old lady. "I must try to keep my face straight when she gets up her courage to let me know what's on her mind. I'm dying of curiosity."

"Maybe if you go into her room she'll tell you to-night," said Mr. Pinner.

Mrs. Pinner went softly into the little room and saw Mary Daingerfield lying asleep in her white bed. She tiptoed noiselessly out.

"I reckon this isn't so awful weighty like the other, that going to live at the yellow house," she said. "Anyway, she can sleep on this and I doubt very much if she was able to sleep on the other."

Mr. Pinner was late one afternoon in calling at the school for Mary. It was almost five o'clock.

"We must ride up briskly," he said, "or mother will be frightened." But after he spoke he walked his horse.

"I've a queer feeling in my head, little girl," he explained, as they rode down the lane. "I've had it the greater part of the day and I've been very busy. I had to see so many people. I

called at the doctor's and he gave me a whole lot of medicine. I'll have to show my medicine bottles in a hurry to keep mother from scolding me for bringing you home in the dark."

It was dark when they dismounted and went into the house, leaving the chestnut mare and the little gray pony fastened to the posts.

Mrs. Pinner met them at the side door.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "I'm scared to death; it's after five o'clock and there's a terrible storm coming up through the meadow."

Mr. Pinner produced his medicine bottles with a slight laugh, he did not understand about the storm.

"Mother," he said, "I think I'll go to bed."

Mrs. Pinner forgot the storm in the sudden anxiety that his words caused.

"Certainly you must go to bed, father," she said, scrutinizing the old gentleman's drawn face.

Mr. Pinner was in bed when the first clap of thunder broke over the house.

A thunder-storm in the winter is a more terrific thing than a thunder-storm in the summer, very much more so to timid people.

Outside in that terrible storm

The frightened housemaid was called into the sick-room by her terrified mistress, but the cook remained in the kitchen where she sat with her apron over her head.

Mary stayed near the door of the sick-room; she was very anxious about Mr. Pinner.

Suddenly the old lady bounced out. She was wringing her hands.

"Mary," she said, "I'm in terrible trouble. Father is very ill and there's nobody to go for the doctor. There may be a man in the barn, I don't know. Your horses are still in the lane. I wonder they don't break loose. Job's at the store; if he wasn't he'd be in the closet, and oh, I can't blame any of them, they're human if they are black. Isn't this awful?"

She dashed excitedly back into the sick-room.

The next instant the cook heard Mrs. Pinner's little girl say:

"If grandma asks where I am you tell her I've gone for the doctor."

In a sort of dazed condition Liza heard the door open and shut and knew that the smallest thing at Hayfields was outside in that terrible storm in the winter-time.

Two hours later, dripping wet, bespattered with mud, Mary Daingerfield was back at Hayfields with the doctor.

The storm was over but not the anxiety about Mr. Pinner. Until dawn the doctor and Mrs. Pinner rubbed the patient till their arms ached.

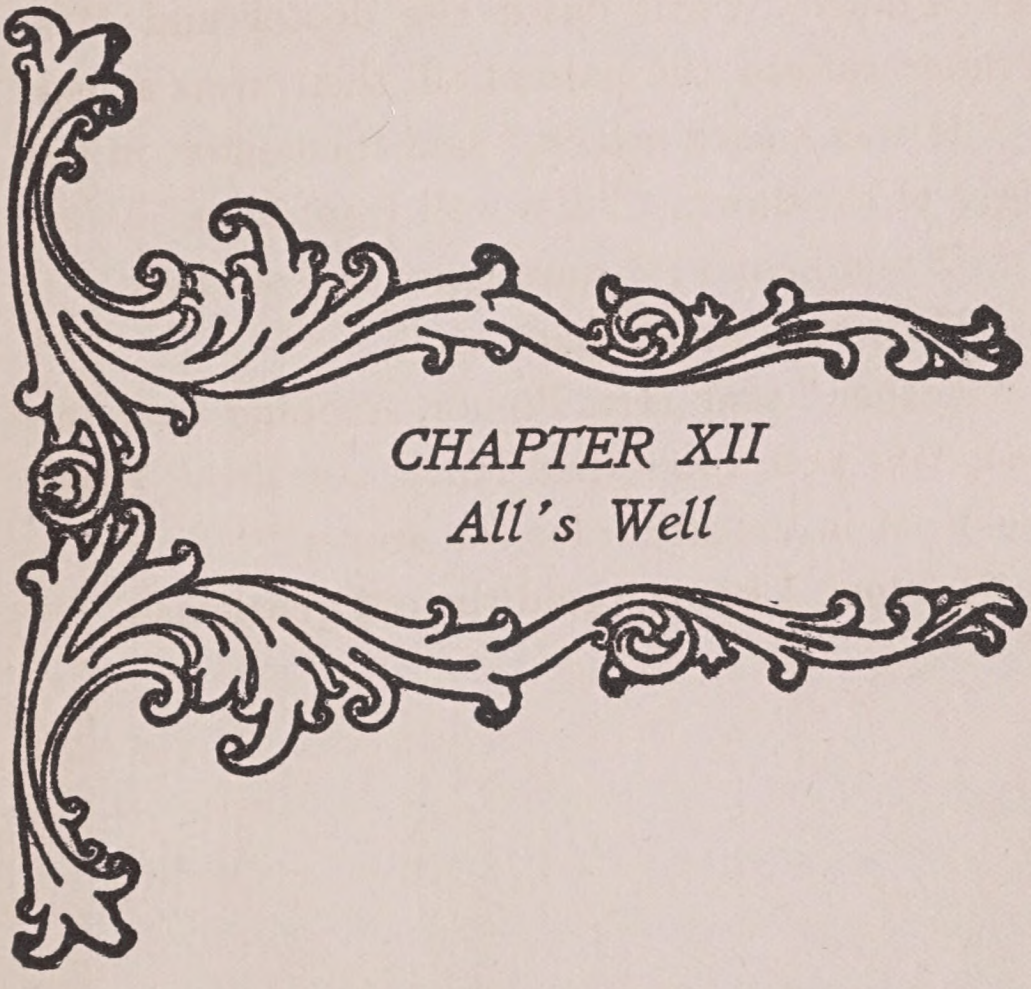
"It was a hard attack," said the doctor, in the light of the dawn. "It's well I got here."

"If you hadn't?" questioned the old lady.

"He'd been gone, that's all."

"Father," said Mrs. Pinner, stooping over the bed, "do you know that Mary, our little Mary, went out in the storm for the doctor?"

"I know, I know," said the old gentleman.



CHAPTER XII

All's Well

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MRS. PINNER'S little girl had been made much of ever since she arrived at Hayfields, and only twice had the old lady lost her temper and flared out, but after the feat of going for the doctor in the storm, Mary's praises were sung in every direction throughout the old house.

"There was only one Mary Pinner true enough," said the old lady, "but I tell you what, father, there is only one little Mary Daingerfield as well."

"That's certain," said the old gentleman, "there's only one little Mary Daingerfield."

Mr. Pinner was growing better day by day. He would be up and about by Christmas. Mrs. Pinner was very thankful that she had not been obliged to write to Dave. She wanted her son sorely, but she wanted him to reach Hayfields, with his wife and the children, on Christmas day.

"Mother is looking forward to having a regu-

lar big, old-time Christmas dinner," said Mr. Pinner.

Mrs. Pinner was happy in the anticipation. One day she said to Mary:

"Honey, have you forgotten that you had something to ask me? Father, don't you think that if there is anything in creation this little girl would like to have and we can give it to her, we ought to do it?"

"I certainly do," said Mr. Pinner.

"There, Mary!" cried Mrs. Pinner, "now you ask right out."

Then the little girl made known her plan. Neither the old gentleman nor the old lady laughed as she divulged it. She asked them to loose those bonds of the law that held her to Hayfields, to let her take the money that had been accumulating in the little bank and to go back to the house in Willowbrook that her papa had rented, there to gather together Kit and Buz and the baby, and aunty too. She could not spend the money in the little bank to better advantage than by using it to set herself and Kit up in a little business. Aunty would make cakes and she and Kit would sell them. In the sum-

mer there was a camp-meeting near Willowbrook and at that time, especially, they would have a flourishing trade.

"Think of her thinking of all that!" cried the old lady.

The old gentleman reached for the two little hands and held them very close.

"Do you want to leave us, Mary?" he asked.

Weeks ago she could have met his eyes with an honest "yes," now she could not. Her little heart was torn.

"I don't want Kit to live at the yellow house any more," she said, "and I want Buz and the baby."

"And she wants you and me a little bit, I believe, mother."

"Do you, Mary?" questioned Mrs. Pinner.

"You will have the other children," answered the little girl, but she knew and they knew that she wanted them too.

"So if you can't have all of us you will choose Kit and Buz and the baby, is that it?" asked the old lady.

Mary nodded.

"Even though you'll be poor?"

"Yes," answered the little girl very softly.

"Father," cried Mrs. Pinner, enthusiastically, "she's been saying her prayers awful good down in the little church, I've been noticing. Now, you and I owe Mary a great deal and I'm of the opinion that we ought to make a bargain with her. First, dear heart, I've got something to tell *you;* father and I both think that the little church is better than the big one. Father's had leanings that way a long time and the night of the storm just settled me. I felt glad all over that the two of us had been attending the little church and my soul cried out that such things count, and they do."

"Yes, they count," said the old gentleman, "and we must make a very honest bargain, mother."

"Suppose we say," suggested the old lady, quite tranquilly, "that if she stays here for the Christmas dinner and meets Dave's people, and after that still wishes to carry out her plan, we will lend help instead of hinderance?"

"Will that satisfy you, Mary?" asked Mr. Pinner.

The brown head nodded.

"Her house will have to be furnished and I reckon the store ought to have a counter in it," said Mrs. Pinner, with a peal of laughter. "You must be ready with your pocketbook, father, when the little black bank is broken. We'll see to it that Kit gets away from the yellow house and that Miss Jane relinquishes her hold on Buz, and that the baby comes home from the asylum."

"Does that satisfy you, Mary?" repeated Mr. Pinner.

The demure little girl said "yes" to this, but she spoke it very softly.

So it was arranged. She could remain at Hayfields if she wished, or she could go. Of course she would go, but she found herself wishing more than once that Mrs. Pinner was not quite so enthusiastic over that imaginative fixing up of the store. If her mamma and papa had lived, she and Kit would never have had to keep store. She wondered if aunty would not grumble a little.

One pleasant afternoon Mrs. Pinner drove over to the post-office. She took Mary with her and allowed the little girl to run around to see aunty while she herself attended to an important matter.

Aunty was grumbling with the backache. She had just finished a tremendous wash.

"Aunty," said Mary, "did you know that Mr. Dave Pinner is going to be married and that he is coming home to live?"

"Sakes alive, no!" cried aunty. "Well, dat's a putty how-do!"

"He is coming home with his wife and the children," said the little girl.

Then aunty cried, "I cla'!" and sat down on the floor. "Little Miss Mary, come right here!" she commanded.

The child went obediently into the black arms.

"Dar ain't no dependin' on nobawdy's folks but your own, dat's a fact!" declared aunty, irately. "So dat big good-for-nuttin' Dave Pinner gunno fetch a woman an' a lot o' chillen down to Hayfields? Honey, dat's what I calls a mean trick. If you ain't got your own mamma an' your own papa to look after you, I tell you, chile, you's got it hawd in dis world."

"Would you like us all to be together again and you come to live with us, aunty?" asked little Miss Mary.

"Would I, honey?" screamed the old woman.

"Ain't I hongry for you all? Jest don't talk 'bout it."

"Would you come even if you had to work hard, aunty?"

"I'd come a-trottin'," she cried.

"One satisfaction I got durin' dese monts," said aunty, after a little, "is dis: I ben writin' to Miss Cynthy. I ben givin' it to her hawd fer handin' my chillen round to nobawdy an' sendin' 'em off to de 'sylum. Dat was de bigges' iniquitous ting I eva heered of! Honey, many a time I ben tankful you learned your ole aunty to write a letta. I ben tellin' Miss Cynthy dat while I was knocked out a home I's got some hawt for de chillen. I ben tellin' her dat you chillen was her own kin an' dat she can't knock de kinship off. So Dave Pinner, he gunno git married, is he? He gunno come home an' try an' shuffle you, is he? Honey, dey took you in de law, an' dey bound to stand by de law. Dey give you a piano, Kit was tellin' me."

"The law can be changed sometimes," said Mary.

"It kin? Laws! you pore little soul! I wish de Day o' Jedgment was here an' I had all my

little white chillen in my arms. 'Ginst dat time, what's gunno become of you all anyway, an' what's gunno become of your old black aunty?"

Mary no longer entertained any doubt. She was sure that aunty would be glad to make the cakes and to help sell them too, but she also felt a satisfaction in the thought of those letters that the old woman had written to her Cousin Cynthia. No, the kinship could not be shaken off!

Mrs. Pinner spoke well of aunty all the way back to Hayfields.

"The old woman's had it hard too," she said. "I reckon she'd rather be with you children than anywhere else in the world, and I am sure that she's a real good nurse. We white folks don't always give the blacks the credit they deserve."

"Kit and Buz like aunty better than any grown person in the world," said Mary.

"Don't you, too?" asked Mrs. Pinner.

"Once," answered Mary, "I thought that I liked Cousin Cynthia better than aunty, but I don't now."

"Then you like the black woman best after all," said Mrs. Pinner.

"I like her third best," said Mary.

The old lady was satisfied. Mr. Pinner might be the first of those two people ahead of aunty, that was right; she was glad to be the second.

"Father," she said, when they reached Hayfields, "it's all settled. The black woman has been taken into the secret of the store and she's willing to do her part."

"I didn't tell her about the store," said Mary.

"Maybe she isn't going to leave us, mother," said Mr. Pinner. "If she's pleased with Dave's folks she's to stay on at Hayfields, that was in the bargain, you know."

The little girl crept quietly out of the room, but she heard the old lady say:

"Father, we oughtn't to tease her. Can't you see that the child is torn two ways? She wants to go and she wants to stay."

"You're right, mother, it's a shame to tease her," said the old gentleman.

The "grandpa" and the "grandma" came so easily now. Yes, she was torn two ways. She wanted to go and she wanted to stay.

"Somebody is taking good long looks at the furniture in the little room," said the old lady,

"and playing quiet little good-bye notes on the piano."

"Mother, it isn't fair," said Mr. Pinner.

"She was found yesterday hugging the pony," declared Mrs. Pinner in triumph.

No, it was not fair. She ought never to have been given away to these kind old people. She had not forgotten Kit and Buz and the baby like the little red calf had forgotten the old cow down in the meadow, but she had learned to love grandpa and grandma dearly. She wanted to take care of Kit and Buz and the baby but she wanted to stay at Hayfields too.

"Is one of the children a little girl?" she asked Mrs. Pinner on another occasion, while her brown eyes fastened themselves steadfastly upon the piano.

The expected answer came:

"Yes, one of them is a little girl. Father, Dave said that one of them was a little girl, didn't he?"

Mr. Pinner did not answer. Of course he knew how it would be; the little girl would own the piano, and he was sorry.

"Honey," said the old lady, "father gave it to

you. You needn't let her play on it unless you wish."

"I won't be here," said Mary.

"Then you can just carry your property with you," said Mrs. Pinner, emphatically.

"If you and grandpa do what you say about—about the store," said Mary, "the little girl may have the piano and all my other things too."

"Not your desk? You wouldn't give away the desk that grandpa thought you'd like better than anything in the world? You couldn't do that? Why, you write your diary on your desk. You certainly will carry the desk with you, honey?"

Grandma's voice was very kind, but Mary said "No," and ran out of the parlor.

"I'm sick waiting for Christmas," said the old lady.

"Mary," called Mr. Pinner, "come here a minute."

He knew she would come at once; she was the most obedient and the very best of little girls.

She was glad that he did not lift her to his knee or to the arm of his chair.

"Mother and I have something to tell you,

Mary," he said, quite gravely, while the old lady screwed up her face protestingly. "We wanted to wait till Christmas, but if you'd rather hear it now—mother, if she'd rather hear it now ——"

"You'd rather wait till Christmas, wouldn't you, honey?" interrupted Mrs. Pinner.

The little girl said "Yes," meekly, and again she ran away.

The great house at Hayfields was in a commotion on Christmas day. Everywhere outside the windows you could see snow. The two-horse sleigh had gone to meet Dave and his family at the Willowbrook station; the dinner was in steady progress and Mrs. Pinner was bustling and happy.

Well, why shouldn't she be? She was kind and generous to everybody; it was only fair that she should have what she wanted in the end. She had said long ago to grandpa, and he had agreed with her, that Hayfields was a lonely place and they must enliven it. It was still a quiet place even after the little girl came, except on those days when Kit and Buz were visiting.

When the dinner was well under way, the old lady arrayed herself in her best black silk and

helped Mary into the prettiest of her white dresses; then they went over to the parlor and sat down with grandpa to wait.

"Mother," said the old gentleman, "I wish they'd hurry."

"I wish so too," said Mrs. Pinner. "Father, I imagine somebody is thinking about the store."

"Not on Christmas day," said Mr. Pinner, with a tender little laugh.

When the sleigh-bells were heard jingling merrily down the lane, and when the old lady and the old gentleman stood up excitedly, and then rushed into the hall, Mrs. Pinner's little girl made her escape. They were eager to meet their own and she was Mrs. Pinner's little girl only in the law. After Christmas day she would not be that, she would be Mary Daingerfield, keeping store over at Willowbrook.

The commotion caused by the arrival of the party was centred in the hall, and if Mary Daingerfield's hands had not been pressed close to her ears she would have heard several very familiar sounds, one of them the big brave voice of a very little boy.

The first thing she did hear was the voice of

the old lady. It penetrated the hands pressed to the ears, and instantly they dropped.

"I thought we'd find her here! You go right in and tell her. Well, father, you don't mean to say you've left Dave already?"

Mary thought for an instant that it was Dave who was coming in to tell her, for although she had unstopped her ears she had not opened her eyes; but it must be Dave's wife. Perhaps Dave had persuaded his wife to tell her that she need not go away from Hayfields on their account, that the place was large enough for all of them.

She heard a woman's gentle step, she felt tender arms about her—there was something almost familiar in the caress. She looked up, and there was Cousin Cynthia.

"You dear little thing," said Cousin Cynthia, "I've been hearing all about it."

"We have a whole heap to thank her for," said the old lady, gratefully.

"And so have I," said Cousin Cynthia, with a queer little laugh.

"Look there!" said Mr. Pinner, in distress. "This wasn't the right way to do it, mother. The little girl is crying."

"She doesn't understand," said Cousin Cynthia. "Mary, won't you let me help you take care of Kit and Buz and the baby?"

"Yes," said Mary, "but I don't want to leave grandpa and grandma."

"Father," cried the old lady, "she doesn't know that her Cousin Cynthia is Dave's wife."

She knew it then with that tightening of Cousin Cynthia's arms.

"Tell her," said Mrs. Pinner, "that Kit and Buz and the baby are all here, that they are the children we've been expecting. Tell her that the black woman is out there with the baby."

"Here's Dave," said the old gentleman. "In my opinion our little Mary has done as much for Dave as for anybody."

Dave thought so too, judging from the way he was smiling.

"I want to see her face," he said, "I want to see how big she is."

"She's thinking whether she'll go over to Willowbrook and keep store or stay here with us," said Mrs. Pinner, "you mustn't bother her, Dave."

"Mother," said Mr. Pinner, "you and Dave

take yourself back to the rumpus, the rest of us will join you directly; somebody isn't quite ready for the fun."

He sat upon the side of the little white bed, and presently he said:

"Maybe she'll come to me for a while, and you take a chair and rest yourself."

The little girl and Dave's wife both obeyed.

"We're old people, my wife and I," said Mr. Pinner, speaking to Cousin Cynthia while he patted the brown head, "and we're bound to make some mistakes in the raising of children. I'm glad you've come; I'm glad you've brought Dave home; we need you both. This little girl is all right now; she's made her decision; yes, indeed, she has fully made up her mind to be Mrs. Pinner's little girl."

Then Mary put her lips to the old gentleman's ear.

"And Mr. Pinner's, too," she whispered.

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